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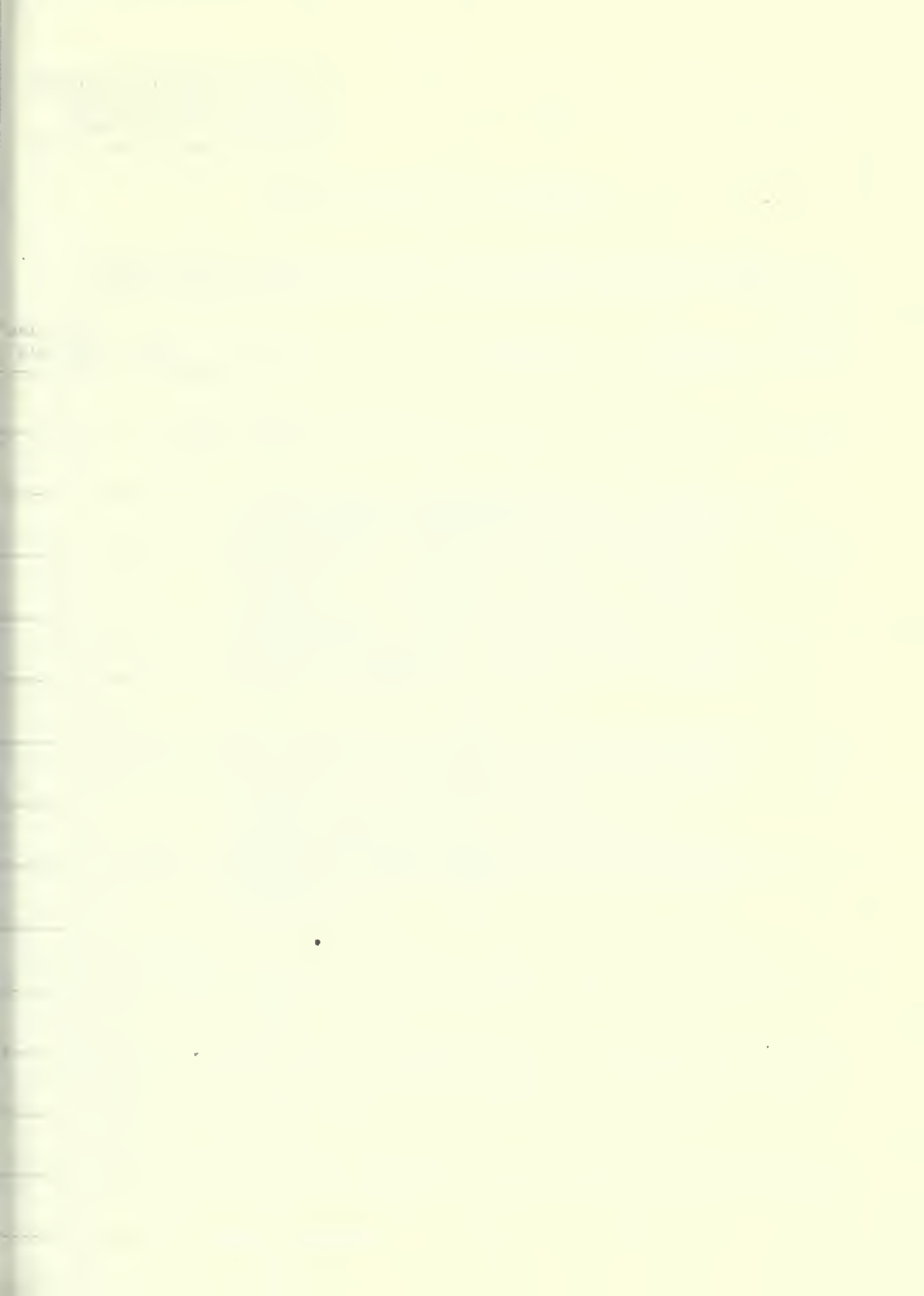
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Women in Politics Oral History Project

Clara Shirpser

ONE WOMAN'S ROLE IN DEMOCRATIC PARTY POLITICS:  
NATIONAL, CALIFORNIA, AND LOCAL, 1950-1973

In Two Volumes

With an Introduction by  
Alan Cranston

An Interview Conducted by  
Malca Chall

Copy No. 1

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Clara Shirpser (left) and India Edwards at a luncheon at Athens Club, Oakland, California; Johnson-Humphrey presidential campaign, October 1964.



THEY ARE THE ONLY TWO PEOPLE  
WHO HAVE EVER BEEN  
KILLED BY A TRAIN



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## VOLUME II

IX ACTIVITIES AS NATIONAL COMMITTEEWOMAN, 1954-1955  
(Interview 11, February 21, 1973)Paul Butler Replaces Steve Mitchell

Chall: Last time we stopped we were talking about the election of the State Central Committee in 1954. So, today I think we will start with Paul Butler.

Shirpser: Yes, surely. Something we have to do, too, is get to De Sapio's visit to California.

Chall: We'll get to that today.

Shirpser: I don't think so. [Laughter] Not if we're going to do that resolution.

Chall: All right. Well, we'll take it your way. Anyway, I'm set for it.

Shirpser: First, there was the election of Paul Butler. [December, 1954]

Chall: Can you tell me how it was that he was--well, not that he was elected, but why it was that Mitchell chose to resign at that point?

Shirpser: No one is really sure. Perhaps, enough controversy had centered around him, and so many people were having problems with him, that he probably found it very uncongenial to continue. Maybe there was some pressure on him, too, to resign.

You can't be sure what went on behind the scenes, but Steve Mitchell favored Paul Butler. Most members thought that was true. In fact, I have several letters from people that wrote to me in confidence, some of our national leaders in Washington,



Shirpser: who felt this was true, but said this was "off the record" so I can't quote them.

I started to receive wires and phone calls. This is really one of the most difficult things in politics; one of the things that made me suffer most was when good people, whom I liked, were contesting and you couldn't remain neutral, you had to make a choice. You could see good qualifications in each of them. Some of them you would have preferred, and with others you thought that it was the wisest thing to choose them. Sometimes, you knew that they were going to win anyhow and it might be expedient to support them.

I don't think I ever was expedient in that regard. After the Paul Butler election, I was in great distress because I hadn't supported Mike Disalle, whom I knew well and admired. I campaigned in Ohio with Estes.

I called both Adlai and Estes to see if they had any choice. Adlai favored Paul Butler, which was the decisive thing for me. Estes had decided not to take any stand in this election, but he did ask all of us who called him to make sure the chairman who came in would be neutral in the 1956 elections. All Estes said was that if he decided to run he hoped the chairman would not be committed to any one candidate, and that there would be fair play, and that the chairman would do what he was supposed to do, which was to remain neutral.

This is noteworthy in view of what happened later.

Chall: Were the promises extracted from him?

Shirpser: Yes, he did make that promise to me and to many others with whom I conferred. Later when the situation arose in the 1956 campaigns, Martha Ragland, Myrtle McIntyre and I wired him, reminding him of his promise of neutrality. I issued a press release because Estes asked me to; I was, by that time, national vice-chairman of his campaign. We'll go into that when we get to '56.

Paul Butler phoned me almost immediately asking for my support. He was a member of the National Committee. He was someone I knew, and liked, and had worked with. The natural inclination is to support one of your colleagues, and since Adlai said he wanted him this was the thing that I preferred to do.



Shirpser: I asked for time to think about it. I got a wire from the Pennsylvania group, signed by the two National Committee members, David Lawrence, who went on to be governor of Pennsylvania, and Emmy Guffey Miller, the grande dame of the Democratic National Committee. She had been most effective, and was a hard working and distinguished woman.

I worked with her closely on the Equal Rights Amendment for women. In fact, it was at her request that I went to testify.

Chall: When was this?

Shirpser: I would imagine it was in 1956. I testified before the appropriate congressional committee. Also, at her request I asked Estes if he would carry the bill. I believe he was one of the first senators, with a group of others, to introduce the bill on equal rights for women.

This goes way back to '56, or it may have been '58, I'm not positive. But, it was certainly in that time period. I have a wire from Alice Paul, national chairman of the Women's Committee on Equal Rights, when the resolution finally did come to the floor of the U.S. Senate. Alice Paul told me of her great joy, and said that I had had a very strong role in making this possible.

The Pennsylvania group wanted their own Pennsylvania political leader as national chairman. His name was James Finnegan. I didn't know him. I didn't have any special reason for supporting him. Then George Rock called me, who was one of my close friends on the committee, the national committeeman from Colorado, and he was "masterminding" Mike Disalle's campaign.

I had much admiration for Mike, and I thought he'd be a fine chairman. Then, I got a letter from Senator Stuart Symington. Stu wrote to me, "Before committing yourself, Clara, I would like to request that you talk to Sam Rayburn. He's going to be there, and he has some very definite ideas about the chairman. So, I told him how highly I think of you, and he wants to see you and discuss his ideas with you."

I had already heard that Mr. Sam was backing Congressman Hale Boggs as national chairman. So, here we had a whole series of people who were very well known, and had strong sources of support. And it was obvious we were going to have quite a spirited contest in New Orleans.





Shirpser: After I got there and we National Committee members talked to each other it became more and more apparent that Paul Butler was going to get it. Many friends said to me, "For once in your life, why don't you go along, instead of struggling to support someone who isn't going to win? Why don't you do the easy and the wisest thing, and not get yourself involved in controversy?"

This came to me from many friends on the National Committee, and since Estes hadn't taken a stand, and Adlai had, it seemed the wise and sensible thing to do, to support Paul Butler.

Before committing myself Paul Butler had called me long distance before the New Orleans meeting. He had asked for my support, and told me how much he enjoyed working with me, and how much my support would mean to him. I had no reason not to support him, but I said that I didn't want to commit myself that early.

But I asked him that question again, "Will you be neutral in the 1956 campaign? Will you allow any candidate who wants to run to run without putting any obstacles in his path, and without any statements from you, showing that you are favoring one candidate? I know you're close to Adlai Stevenson. I don't have any idea who is going to run for president in 1956, but I want to be sure that you're going to be fair, and you will not be committed to one candidate."

He assured me in the strongest terms that this would be his position.

Well, I called Mr. Sam, and he made an appointment to see me in a small lobby in the Roosevelt Hotel. I went there and I was quite flattered that he would take the time to talk to me.

He gave me reasons why he didn't want to support those candidates for chairman. He thought that the one man who could pull the party together and do a wonderful job would be Hale Boggs. I said, "But, do you realize how much strength is built up for Paul Butler?" And then, "Adlai's for him."

He said, "Well, my strategy is this. We'll table the election. We will postpone it because Hale has recently come into the picture, and I realize he doesn't have enough support to win here now. But, it is his home state. (We were in Louisiana.) I feel sure that by the time this meeting is over,



Shirpser: that Hale will have demonstrated his capabilities and committee members will be for him."

I looked at Sam Rayburn and I said, "Mr. Sam, do you realize that we have all spent our own money (at least most of us had) to come all the way to New Orleans for the specific purpose of selecting a national chairman? I don't believe that the National Committee members would possibly go along with tabling this election, and putting it off until a future meeting."

Mr. Sam was furious! He looked at me and he said, "Oh, your opinion is more valid than mine, I guess!" I said, "Well, Mr. Sam, I am a member of the National Committee. I have participated in a lot of these discussions. It's my opinion that Paul Butler is going to win by a big majority, and that there is absolutely no chance of getting through a motion to table and postpone the election."

So, Mr. Sam got up and started to walk away. I thought, "Oh, I've made the most influential person in the whole Congress my enemy! Who am I to tell him?" But, again, I was trying to tell him the truth as I saw it. This, I think, was the most valuable thing I did in politics: Whether people agreed with me or not, they knew I was telling them what I felt was true, and that it wasn't based on emotion, it was based on fact.

Mr. Sam strode away, and as he went down the steps, I--

Chall: He left you sitting in the room?

Shirpser: Yes. I stood up looking after him, stricken. I was out in the lobby watching him walk away, and I thought, "Well, I might as well resign at this point, with him hating me as he does now. There's just no point in going on."

When he got to the head of the stairs and started walking down--we were on the mezzanine floor--he turned around and waved to me and smiled. I thought, "Oh, thank goodness! He isn't as angry as he was when he left the room!"

Later, he told me that he was convinced that I had told him the truth, that he gave it consideration and talked to other people and he got the same opinions from others he could trust; that he knew it took courage on my part to express a different opinion from his.

I did vote for Paul Butler, and he won.



Shirpser: Then I was so distressed that I went to Mike Disalle's room, where he was with his wife after the election, and I said, "I never felt so badly in all my life. I wanted to vote for you, Mike. I kept saying to myself that I should. Then I let everyone else overwhelm me--particularly I was influenced by what Adlai had told me, and the fact that Estes was staying neutral." I said, "The pressure was more than I could take, I feel terrible. I know that you would be a great chairman. I wanted to support you, and I didn't."

I have the nicest letter from him. You saw it?

Chall: I wondered what it was all about.

Shirpser: Yes. He said, "We were so concerned about your distress..." And he wrote that he understood my position perfectly, and he had only the kindest feelings, and the best good will. If he could ever do anything to help me, to call on him.

I think it was the one time in my political life that I didn't do what I wanted to do, in terms of thinking that Mike would have been the best chairman. Of course, he went on to be elected governor of Ohio. He is a fine person. I had to make a choice, and this seemed the choice that I should make.

### The Light Side

Shirpser: The meeting also had its light moments. New Orleans is the gayest place in the whole world. I had a most exciting three days there. There were so many parties. For instance, I remember the party at the Edgar Stern home, which is one of the most beautiful, spacious, artistic homes I've ever seen in my life. It was a magnificent party. Phil Stern, their son, was the director of research for the Democratic National Committee.

When I arrived in New Orleans, I went to register at the Roosevelt Hotel, which is the older hotel and has great charm. Someone called, "Clara." I looked up and there was Jim Mayfield.

Jim was from Alabama. He was a supreme court judge of Alabama at that time. He had been Estes' floor manager in the 1952 convention. So, I had worked closely with him on that resolution which we tried, without success, to get on the platform.



Shirpser: So, Jim rushed up to me. You know, Southerners are very effusive. He was really happy to see me. He said, "Will you have dinner with me tonight?"

I said, "Well, I'm having dinner with India Edwards." He looked at me and he said, "My first night in New Orleans and you want me to have dinner with India Edwards?"

I said, "No. I don't want you to do anything. I'm just telling you where I'm going." He looked at me in despair, and he said, "Greater devotion hath no man. I'll come to India Edwards' dinner, if you will promise to go out with me afterwards. I want to show you New Orleans." I had never been there before. I knew that he had been divorced recently.

So, I said, "Fine. I'd love to do that if you will get another couple to go with us." He said that he would.

We came to India's dinner, and he was charming. He was a brilliant man, very attractive, tall, good looking. He'd been fencing champion of the United States. We had so much in common, you know, with our mutual devotion to Estes and all the agonies we'd suffered. We had kept in touch by mail, occasionally, too.

Chall: Was he on the National Committee?

Shirpser: No. He came there because he was interested in the meetings, and most of them were open. Very few were closed meetings, unless we were talking about credentials, or something that had to be discussed frankly (with the press not there) in terms of people and personnel.

There were many interesting people at India's dinner. Of course I had asked India if I could bring Judge Jim Mayfield. There must have been twelve or fourteen people. Everybody spoke of the exciting French Quarter and after dinner many of us did make the rounds of the French Quarter.

Every day there were meetings: breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. India, and Hale and Lindy Boggs were so nice to me, too, in spite of the fact that I hadn't been able to support Hale.

It's strange. Probably the people I knew best from that committee were from Alabama. Jim Smith was a national committeeman, and he was a lot younger than I, but he was so thoughtful about taking me around.





Shirpser: He had asked Nanna and me if he could drive us to a meeting where Adlai made a speech at a large auditorium. Most of the National Committee members were having dinner first, and he invited me and Nanna to go with him. (Nanna Thomas was the national committeewoman from Alabama and a strong supporter of Estes.)

He was much more influential than I. He had a box. I would have sat way back in the main part of the auditorium, otherwise. So, I saw and heard Adlai, close up, and met many interesting people who were in the box.

Then one night, at another meeting of the National Committee, he asked me to have dinner with him. I said, "Sorry, but I can't. I'm meeting some of the women National Committee members for dinner." He said, "Well, who's coming?" And I told him.

Then, later, when I met them at a table in the dining room there Jim was, our host. He had invited the other three women, too. And so, he was treating all four of us to dinner in order to have dinner with me! And I thought that was really quite exceptional. I mean, wonderful things like this kept happening which were great compensation for the problems you had, too.

I remember New Orleans as a highlight of a really exciting, wonderful time--seeing so many places, and people, and things that I hadn't known existed. Of course, the restaurants are superb! All in all, that National Committee meeting, while it had real problems and suffering about who to support...I think I had one of the best times in my whole life there!

We haven't talked about Matt McCloskey's visit to California.

### Matt McCloskey

Chall: When was that?

Shirpser: That was in 1955, toward the middle of the year, I believe, or early fall. He was the treasurer of the Democratic National Committee. He was interested in some things I'd been working on, and talked to me about them.



Shirpser: He was one of the most delightful people I've ever known. He has since died. Even in his picture, his twinkling blue eyes come through. He always had a smile on his face. He was Irish. He was a prince of the Catholic church. In fact, he was our ambassador to Ireland, later.

He was one of the most successful contractors in the United States. He built the Archives Building and many other buildings in Washington. He came from Pennsylvania.

I think he's the one who originated the \$100-a-plate dinner in Pennsylvania, which was thought by most states to be far beyond what we could do. He convinced us that we could do it.

Matt called me from Washington and he said that California was way, way behind in our quota. We always were, but this disturbed him. He said that he had a plan, and he wanted to know what I thought of it. He would come to California, and we'd start in the northern part of the state, and we'd drive or take a plane from place to place for three days, and we would meet with the political officials in a given area, whoever I thought was appropriate to ask, including party officials, and the club presidents, and the women, labor, and minority groups. He wanted to talk to them and explain the importance of fund raising and how to do it.

So, he said, "Will you get those meetings together?" I said, "How many meetings do you want?" He said, "Oh, we can do at least four a day. A breakfast, a lunch, and a dinner, and possibly a cocktail reception before the dinner."

I said, "Well, I'll do my best." Then he said, "Oh, I didn't tell you. No fund raising at the meetings, and I will pay for the meals." I said, "You have to be kidding!"

He said, "No. Has nobody ever done this before?" I said, "Not since I've been in politics." But, he said, "Naturally, it doesn't have to be filet steak. It can be a simple meal, and I'll take care of all the expenses. Please impress this upon whoever is chairman at each of the meetings."

I said, "Well, they'll be delighted. No one has ever been so good to us before. I think it's marvelous. We'll furnish the transportation, of course." Wherever we were going the chairman would take us to the next place and then turn us over to someone else.



On the Creamed Chicken and Peas Circuit

Chall: This was paid for by the National Committee?

Shirpser: No, indeed. Matt McCloskey, himself, paid for it. He was a wealthy man. He saw the importance of doing this, and he decided he wanted to do it.

So, each of the people I called--I called the county chairman in each case, it seemed the wise thing to do. I told them that the people invited had to be a broad cross section of the party, and to be sure that minority people were invited, too. I said, "For goodness sake, keep the menu simple. Matt is paying out of his own pocket for all these meals. So, please make it as inexpensive a menu as you can. But, make it nice because he said he wanted it nice, but as inexpensive as possible."

We started out with breakfast, at which we had scrambled eggs and chicken livers. We went on to lunch where--

Chall: Excuse me. Could you tell me where, what locale?

Shirpser: Well, we went as far north as Sacramento. I believe we didn't go further than that. Then we went to Stockton, of course. I'm sure there was one meeting in San Francisco where he would meet the San Francisco contributors. I don't remember the details, but I'm positive that was where we would have started.

Then we started going south from San Francisco. I remember we were in Modesto, and stopped briefly in Madera, and went on to Fresno, and Bakersfield. There I turned him over to the Los Angeles group. I didn't go to Los Angeles.

Chall: How many days did he stay in California?

Shirpser: Three days.

Chall: Three days from breakfast through dinner?

Shirpser: Yes. Sometimes evening meetings. He was indefatigable. His son-in-law was with him. He was a tall fellow who loved to play golf whenever possible and he wasn't as exhausted as we were.

But I want to tell you more about the menus, it's so amusing. We had eggs and chicken livers for breakfast. We had



Shirpser: creamed chicken and peas for lunch. We had fried chicken at dinner. The next day we had eggs again for breakfast--possibly something else with them. We had some kind of chicken dish for lunch. We had chicken in some form for dinner.

At that point, Matt turned to me and said, "Isn't there any meat in California? Don't you have anything to eat but chicken? I'm going to be sprouting chicken feathers if I eat chicken once more!"

I said, "Well, I was trying to keep expenses down. I didn't check the menus, but I told everyone to keep it as inexpensive as possible, and chicken is cheaper than meat." He said, "If I see one more piece of chicken I don't think I can eat it."

Then I called ahead to the next place we were going, and said to the chairman, "This is the situation and we've had nothing but chicken for two days." Matt was a big hearty man who loved good food. "Shoot the works. Have roast beef or something tonight. Or, I won't dare face him."

The answer was: "The menu is all planned and ordered. I can't change it now." "Well, at least give Matt, the head table, some roast beef. Maybe the others won't notice it." [Laughs]

Well, so they did. And Matt was furious at me! He said, "You could not do that! I have to eat what everybody else is eating." I said, "Well, when I talk I'll tell them they ran out of chicken." You know, because I introduced him always. "I'll just say, 'Please don't think that we were trying to have something special at the head table.'" The poor man was so fed up with eating chicken!

And I told Estes. Estes wrote me later and said, "I saw Matt McCloskey, and he told me that chicken feather story." [Laughs] So, he did have roast beef the third night.

Matt was so jolly and so full of fun. While we're talking about him, I want to finish two incidents that come into mind.





### Donor of Free Tickets to \$100-a-Plate Dinners

Shirpser: We had a big \$100-a-plate dinner. I was always fighting the battle of the Young Democrats. They couldn't afford to come to \$100-a-plate dinners. So, I said, "Well, you can sell tickets, and the one who can sell the most tickets will get two tickets to the \$100-a-plate dinner. I'll guarantee it."

I also had promised to the club [CDC] membership on the basis of who got the most memberships in their area that they would get one ticket also.

Hy Raskin was out here masterminding the dinner. So, I went to him before the dinner and said, "I need two tickets for the Young Democrats and one for a CDC club contest, explaining the situation. He said, "We don't give tickets away for this dinner. People have to buy them."

I said, "Well, I have promised." One couple had sold probably twelve tickets. On the fact of getting in \$1200, they certainly should get in. We always gave away a few tickets. I knew that well.

He said, "No, I won't do it. The National Committee does not give away tickets for a \$100-a-plate dinner. If this were known no one would ever buy tickets." Well, I was furious; this was very insulting.

I said, "What do you expect me to do? Buy the tickets myself? I will give Ad's and my ticket to the Young Democrats. I will announce to the press why I did it." And I stomped out of there.

Then I went to Matt's suite and told him the story. He was livid with rage. He said, "With all you do in this state, that you can't go and ask the National Committee vice-deputy for three tickets is outrageous. I'll be happy to give you six tickets." And he did.

It was such a pleasure to give these tickets to people who worked hard and who could not afford to pay \$100. When I make a promise, I keep it, and I thought it was a shame that we had so few young people at these dinners. So, that's another fine thing Matt did with his customary generosity.



## Friend and Advisor

Shirpser: Another thing he did, which I've never forgotten: When the 1956 primary contest came up, which was one of the saddest parts of my political life, before I had announced whether I would support Adlai or Estes, we were in Chicago at a National Committee meeting. Both Adlai and Estes were there, and Averell Harriman, and maybe Senator Russell was interested at that point, too.

Matt asked me to come to his suite for a talk. He put the facts of life before me. He said, "I was for Estes in '52. I still think the world of him, but, Clara, Adlai's going to get it. You know he's going to get the nomination."

He said, "Really, you should not sacrifice your career. I think what you're doing is very important. I've been all over the United States and I have the highest opinion of what you've accomplished in California and what your future can be. I don't want to see you throw it away. I'm speaking to you as a friend, not as treasurer of the Democratic National Committee."

He said, "Don't do it, Clara. I know how much you think of Adlai. It isn't as if you're going to support someone you don't like. Go along with your state. Every party official in that state is for Adlai except you. Why should you buck the tide? Estes will understand? Go with Adlai."

I said, "I can't do it Matt. I have to be loyal to Estes. I came into politics with him." He said, "Would it help any if I said to you that if Adlai wins I will see that you get recognition far beyond that of national committeewoman? I will make it my business to see that this is so."

This was, of course, a tremendous temptation, and it meant so much to me that Matt had such a high opinion of what I was accomplishing in the Democratic party. In spite of all this I had to say no. But I'll tell you about that later.

These were the things at the national level that made me survive what I was going through here in California. Because relationships like this are precious.

Not that I wanted praise and flattery; it was just that I had to have a feeling of accomplishment from time to time. Often



Shirpser: I didn't get it in California, but I did get it at the national level.

Chall: A recognition of what you were doing by people who...

Shirpser: Yes, who knew what was going on.

Matt was here many times. He always came out for the \$100-a-plate dinners, and I always saw him and had a visit with him. We also met about four times a year as the National Committee.

And he always singled me out for some attention and to discuss things in California. He valued the facts I could bring him.

#### Luncheon for Katie Louchheim

Shirpser: I conceived a precedent-setting idea for a luncheon for Katie Louchheim. India Edwards had resigned her posts as national director of the Democratic woman's organization, and as vice-chairman of the Democratic National Committee, though she didn't have to resign when a new chairman came in. Katie Louchheim replaced her in the Women's Division.

I didn't know Katie well. I had met her and liked her very much. But when they called me from Washington and said that she was going to make a tour, and she wanted to meet some of the party leaders, I got an inspiration. After all, there were three of us in the Bay Area who were national committeewomen from California, two former ones and myself, as the current one.

I thought it would be nice for the three of us to jointly sponsor a luncheon for Katie. I don't think this ever was done before.

Chall: Who were the other two?

Shirpser: Elinor Heller and Lucretia Grady. All three of us lived in the Bay Area. So, it was very easy to call them together.

The invitation gave the dates of their terms: Lucretia was from 1932-1940, and Ellie was from 1944-1952. I only served for four years.



Shirpsers: This was a very good meeting. All three of us said nice things about each other and what each had accomplished. I think it served a good purpose. Katie went back and said many good things about the luncheon.

She said that it was one of the best she'd ever had. It was at the Fairmont Hotel, but it wasn't expensive then. We filled the Gold Room, which takes hundreds and hundreds of women. It was a Northern California meeting.

I was pleased that it worked out well. This created good will and showed that the women in the party were working together.

Chall: Did Liz Snyder come up for that?

Shirpsers: No, I don't believe so. I think that they had a similar one in Southern California.

Then Mr. Truman was here for a \$100-a-plate dinner.

Chall: These \$100-a-plate dinners are sponsored by the National Committee and the money goes directly to national?

Shirpsers: No. They divide it with the State Central Committee. For instance, this letter inviting people was signed by Edmund G. (Pat) Brown, chairman of the dinner committee. This was September, 1955. I'm mentioned as Democratic National Committee-woman; William Roth was at that time the San Francisco County chairman; Leonard Dieden was the Alameda County chairman; Mr. Henry F. Grady was executive committee chairman.

The State Central Committee chairman was Roger Kent. I think that Rex Nicholson had some part in this dinner, and so did Adolph Schumann, who was a good fund raiser. Libby Smith was chairman of the program department, and Dorothy Donahoe was women's chairman of the State Central Committee. She was an assemblywoman.

So, it was a good cross section. We had a big dinner committee. Perhaps fifty or more people on it.

And, of course, it was a joy to have Mr. and Mrs. Truman. And George Killion gave a lovely lunch for him on board the S.S. President Cleveland. He sailed to the Hawaiian Islands when he left San Francisco. Ed Pauley had a beautiful estate on an





Shirpser: island off the Hawaiian Islands. The Trumans stayed there, and they had a lovely visit.

Chall: They were on their way somewhere.

Shirpser: Yes, to Hawaii for a vacation.

Chall: You were always, really, touching the same people for the \$100?

Shirpser: Well, not necessarily, because when Mr. Truman came, naturally the people who had been close to him in his administration or who liked him especially would come to hear him.

When Adlai came, a different group would come to the dinner. When we had the chairman of the National Committee, or Katie Louchheim, you'd get different cross sections of people.

But, it is true that many of the same people continued to come to all of them. This could be a financial drain.

#### Testifying in the Senate on Election Reform

Shirpser: I wonder if we should talk about my testimony before the U.S. Senator Tom Hennings' subcommittee on elections. This took place during that year.

I had worked with Professor Frank Newman about 1954 on the bill called Purity in Elections. Having been a candidate I knew what happens to you.

The background of this is that I was at a Democratic National Committee dinner in Washington, and they had a nice plan. They would put the National Committee members at tables with a senator or a governor. So, we got to meet people in that way.

I was sitting next to Senator Tom Hennings at this dinner. He was one of our most effective senators, and he was chairman of a subcommittee on elections. It was called Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections, and is part of the Committee on Rules and Administration of the United States Senate.

As I realized what Senator Hennings' interest was, I started talking to him about what we'd been doing in California, and how difficult it had been to ever get that bill out of committee,



Shirpsers: because the incumbents liked the system the way it was.

The more we talked the more interested he became and he finally said, "I have to go to New York tomorrow, but the day after tomorrow I have a subcommittee meeting. I would very much like to have you come and tell us about the situation in California." (There was a bill before the committee which it was considering.)

I said, "I don't think I've ever testified before a congressional committee." He said, "Well, all the testimony goes into the Congressional Record. Our format is: you make a short statement and then the questioning starts. I am the chairman. We have a couple of pretty rough people on the committee, but I'm sure you can handle yourself."

I said, "The first thing tomorrow morning I'm going to phone to California for some factual information which I don't have with me. I will try to do it as well as I can." He said, "I'm just delighted that we were sitting next to each other because this is just what I need to know--what is happening in different states, regarding plans for election reform."

I phoned Frank Newman and we had a long discussion. Then I said, "Please air mail, special delivery, any documents you think I should have because I still have forty-eight hours." Frank was delighted that I was going to testify, and he was most helpful in sending me the needed information.

I came to the committee hearing, about eleven o'clock in the morning. Immediately someone came up to me, a young man, and said, "I'm Senator Hennings' administrative assistant, Mrs. Shirpsers. There's a terrible fog in Washington and Senator Hennings' plane is going around and around over the Washington airport. He may not even be able to land here. He may have to go to an adjacent airport. He can't be here this morning for the committee hearing. Senator Carl Curtis of Nebraska will be acting chairman. He can be mean to witnesses. He doesn't like Democrats. He doesn't like women. He'll probably tear you apart."

I looked at him and I said, "Young man, I come from California. And if I can survive California politics, Senator Curtis has no terrors for me. I promised Tom Hennings that I was going to testify, and I'm prepared to do so. You can rely on it that I will not be afraid or intimidated by Senator Curtis."



Shirpser: He said, "Well, I warned you! I'm afraid you're in for an ordeal." I said, "It will be a challenge to meet it then."

Then he said, "Don't antagonize him! Don't say anything that will make him mad." I'd already heard about him. I knew his reputation as being very reactionary.

Naturally, although I was putting on a bold front, I was quaking inside. We came into the committee hearing room. I saw Congressman Harlan Hagan there, who was the congressman from Bakersfield. I knew him well and I told him of the situation. He said, "You don't have to be afraid of him. You can handle yourself." With this encouragement, I went in.

I was the first to testify. Senator Curtis asked me if I had a prepared statement. I said that I had some notes and I would speak to them. I said that, "Our present election laws are so full of loopholes on the one hand, and so full of financial restrictions on the other, they actually encourage evasion and abuses by both political candidates and political parties.

"This makes a farce of our election laws, and in the process of so doing it undermines democracy. I believe that political responsibility is the heart of democracy."

Then, I spoke of my personal experience when I ran for the state assembly, and told him that I filed the most complete accounting that ever was filed in Alameda County. Many of my committee members said, "Well, you don't have to make this so inclusive. You can have a committee buy you space directly in the newspaper for last minute advertising and you can have them buy space directly in a radio station and not have to account for their expenses."

I answered: "Why shouldn't I account for it? That's what the election laws state." They kept telling me, "If you do that you will file a statement that is many times as big as your opponent's."

I said, "I didn't go into politics to start breaking laws. I will file a scrupulously detailed statement."

The county clerk was so amazed when I filed it he almost wouldn't accept it. It was pages long. He said, "Never in history has anybody filed a statement that showed everything



Shirpser: that came in and everything that went out, and this makes extra work for us."

My opponent filed a short statement with less expenditures than mine. From the amount of advertising he did in the papers, radio, and television, he must have spent three or four times as much as in my campaign. But it was legal for him to file as he did.

He didn't know whether a television program for him dropped out of the sky. It was paid for by a committee which donated the time. That's what our election laws allowed anyone to do.

I also told them of my experience with billboards--that you couldn't rent them because some lobbyists controlled almost all the billboards. The lobbyists could give large sums, including billboards, to candidates they favored. The candidates did not have to put those billboards in the campaign expenditures because the lobbyist paid for them and donated them.

I told them that we recently had a candidate running for governor in California. This was one of the most expensive campaigns that had ever taken place. He filed as his total campaign expenses \$2400, which he, himself, had spent. He did not make the notification of what his committee had spent, and from the extensive coverage he had on television, radio, billboards, and newspaper ads, he must have used more than a million dollars in his statewide campaign. (I was told later that his public relations committee had filed expenses.)

I said, "This is a negation of fair play and justice. These loopholes must be closed and decent election laws passed."

When I told the committee about this candidate for governor, who had been elected, Senator Curtis said, "Who was this man? How much do you think he spent?"

I said, "I'm so glad you asked me that question, Senator Curtis. I did not know whether you would like me to mention names, but since you asked me, I'm delighted to tell you that it's the present governor of California, Goodwin J. Knight, Republican. We think that he must have spent conservatively, between one and two million dollars."

Senator Curtis looked at me in a rather stricken way. And he didn't ask me another question.





Shirpser: Reporters were there, too. The Washington Post had a headline, "Democratic National Committeewoman from California criticizes Goodwin Knight. Millions spent for campaign. Two thousand four hundred dollars actually filed in his personal statement." The New York Times picked it up. It was also used in the California newspapers.

It is not in the testimony. Senator Curtis must have deleted it. He probably didn't want it known that he'd asked me this question and laid himself open to the answer, which I gave him.

We went into detail about the reform bill due to questions asked of me by other senators. I explained what our California bill was, the Purity in Election Laws; that you didn't have to list anything below \$50 in that bill. Any contribution over \$50 had to be listed with the name of the contributor, and filed with the official election clerk, at local, county, and local state levels. (In a national election, this would encompass a national listing of contributors, of course.) Some wanted to make \$10 the amount, but this would have made insurmountable bookkeeping problems. But, we thought that \$50 was fair; that anyone who contributed \$50 wouldn't expect any favors for it.\*

There were many other questions asked me. I also mentioned to them the British system. A member of Parliament had been here teaching at U.C. and I had gotten to know him through Frank Newman. He was interested in election laws in California, which he thought were terrible!

He explained the merits of their system which was: that each candidate was allowed to spend the equivalent of about \$2500 (in our money) in his campaign. Their areas are very small in comparison to ours and their campaign lasts a very short time.

The main thrust of their program was that the British government gave each candidate one free mailing to every voter in the district, and it gave them one free radio and TV program, which went all over England, I believe. Or maybe it was just in their own district.

That meant that everybody could contest who could raise \$2500. You did not have to be wealthy to run for office, and you did not need to accept large sums from a few people and be obligated afterwards, and not be free to vote as you wished to do.

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\*An election-reform initiative, Proposition 9, passed in 1974, almost twenty years later. C.S.



Chall: Did the British allow the candidate to go beyond the amount that the government allowed?

Shirpser: No. I asked this member of Parliament, "Suppose you spent more?" He said, "Then, we would not be allowed to serve, if elected, and we would go to jail. WE are a law abiding nation."

His answer was very prompt and definite.

After Senator Hennings returned, he read over my testimony, and he wrote an enthusiastic letter to me. He was glad that I hadn't backed down because he could not be there as chairman. That was a very interesting and productive experience for me, and I enjoyed it.

#### San Francisco Misses the 1956 Democratic National Convention

Shirpser: There was excitement in 1955 about the invitation to hold a 1956 convention in San Francisco.

Chall: Yes, I wanted to ask you about that.

Shirpser: I have a letter which I wrote to Paul Butler. Paul Butler and I were working very well together after he was elected chairman. He thanked me very much for my support, and was cooperative.

But, shortly thereafter, he went to Southern California and didn't even let me know that he was going to be in my state. He completely bypassed me. The press started calling me, as they usually did, "Was he coming to San Francisco?" "No, I had no news that he was coming to California," I said. They said, "Why, it's all scheduled in Southern California. The whole program is all set up. Haven't you been invited to come to those meetings?"

I said, "No. I haven't heard from the chairman. I haven't heard from my so-called colleague, Paul Ziffren." I found this kind of thing inexcusable and humiliating.

I wrote to Paul Butler and I said that he had perhaps forgotten that I was elected to represent the whole state of California, not just Northern California; that for him to come



Shirpser: to my state without any previous notification to me when he, himself, had been a national committeeman and knew what the procedures were, I found insulting!

And he apologized. He said that he had made a mistake. He had been busy. That's a great excuse!

Chall: That's the same thing Steve Mitchell said. And Ziffren went through that with Steve Mitchell--

Shirpser: Yes, and yet Paul Ziffren didn't notify me, and neither did Paul Butler. This is the kind of thing that makes political life so difficult. You have to keep fighting for the prerogatives of your office. Obviously, you shouldn't have to do so.

I pointed out to Paul Butler that when Adlai was coming to California, Bill Blair phoned me and asked me where I thought would be the most valuable places for Adlai to visit, what I thought the schedule should be; was I satisfied with what was happening in the Southern California schedule, and to please come to the meetings there.

I always invited Paul Ziffren to come to the meetings in Northern California. I don't know why he continued to be so rude to me. Certainly, it wasn't because I was inactive.

This letter to Paul Butler tells him what happened in regard to the Republican party's decision to come to San Francisco for the 1956 convention.

There was an uproar among the Democrats because they hadn't been invited by San Francisco to hold their 1956 convention there, also. This is the history of it. I was called by Robert Dolan, who was Mayor Elmer Robinson's personal secretary, about January 27. He told me that the Board of Supervisors had informally discussed an invitation to both political parties for the 1956 convention to come to San Francisco.

I expressed the keenest interest, and told him I would do everything I could to help, gave him the facts on which cities had already made bids to the Democratic National Committee, and that the sum they were pledging was about \$250,000. I suggested the names of several Democratic leaders in the Bay Area, who were businessmen, who could be depended upon to raise funds and to help bring the convention to San Francisco in 1956.



Shirpsen: I also told him that I did not know then when the Site (of the convention) Committee would meet to decide where to go for the convention.

Then, I flew to Los Angeles on January 29 for a meeting. I saw Paul Ziffren at the meeting that evening. He told me that the Site Committee, of which he had been appointed a member by Paul Butler, would meet the following Wednesday.

I told Paul Ziffren of my conversation with Mr. Dolan, and that Mr. Dolan had requested me to keep it confidential until the Board of Supervisors had come to a decision.

The next day I wired Mayor Robinson from Los Angeles. Thank heavens, I am on record as having done this. I informed him that the Site Committee would meet the following Wednesday in Washington, D.C., and I recommended that San Francisco have a representative there. I told him where I was staying in Los Angeles, and then I offered my help.

I did not receive any answer from Mayor Robinson or anyone on his staff. So, I concluded that San Francisco was not interested in having any political 1956 conventions.

Supervisor Harold Dobbs made the original resolution. Then the mayor set up a committee, and that committee was to contact both political parties, but evidently this was not done.

Paul Butler later told me that he had never heard from San Francisco. Of course, Mayor Robinson was a Republican, but I do not understand how he could ignore what the Board of Supervisors had said they wanted to do, and it was insulting to the Democratic party not to be invited to San Francisco for their convention.

I pointed out to Paul Butler that it was going to make it very difficult for us in 1956 in California because with the national spotlight focused on the Republican party in San Francisco, and with all of their speakers being given the opportunity to get on national television, it was going to give the Republican candidates in California a tremendous boost. Obviously, this would hurt the Democratic candidates in California.

I had never heard before of a city that didn't ask both political parties to come to a national convention. You're set up with television, radio, and the press. They want to have both conventions in the same city wherever possible, because it saves them millions of dollars.





Chall: The Republican convention was held in San Francisco that year?

Shirpser: Yes.

Chall: It's important to a city to have a convention?

Shirpser: Oh yes. They contest for it. The amounts guaranteed have gone up. I think they offer as much as \$400,000. Remember IT&T's contribution to the one in 1972, for the Republican convention?

Chall: Yes.

Shirpser: Squire Behrens, the political editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, called me and I told him that Paul Butler and the Site Committee would have considered San Francisco for the national convention if they had known that San Francisco was interested in having them.

I also had a call from the New York Times local editor, who was Larry Davies, and other local reporters. There was a lot of interest. Many local Democrats called me and all expressed regret, with the opinion that California would have a hard time as far as the Democratic party is concerned in the 1956 election.

Chall: Did it really make that much difference?

Shirpser: Yes, I think it did, because the focus of interest in California was then on the Republican party. We couldn't get anything like it for the California Democratic party.

Chall: This would be the state people, though?

Shirpser: Yes. But it also affected the presidential election in 1956, when the candidates for the Republican party were here, and the Democratic candidates for president could only have local coverage, and not national.

I think it affects every election.



Double Cross on Clara's Resolution to Change Convention Rules

Shirpser: We seem to have come to my resolution. We have been working toward that point for a long time, haven't we?

In 1955, I started reading the rules of the convention. With background in the League of Women Voters, you learn to think about strategy and policy and what's going to happen, in terms of what you can do to prevent as well as what you hope to accomplish.

The rules of each convention are made by the Democratic National Committee before the convention, and they're not binding from a previous convention, which, I think, is a good thing. Because otherwise we would be bound with a lot of traditional policies which need reforming.

As I read the rules, I realized that each state that went Democratic in the presidential election would get four extra votes. The only ones who voted for Adlai in 1952, unfortunately, were the nine Southern states. So, this would give them a block of thirty-six additional delegates.

The opposite of this is that those states which did not go Democratic would lose four votes each. So, there were thirty-nine states that would lose four votes each in the North, the West, and the East, where the more liberal and progressive states are.

This change of delegate votes could mean a change in the whole balance of power in a convention. I never gave that as my reason because it wouldn't have been a wise thing to do. But, that was really the motivation which started me working on this.

Because I had seen what happened in the 1952 convention, with the Southern states, and I feared what would happen in the 1956 convention, if they would be even more powerful than they had been before.

At first I couldn't find out whether it would take the two-thirds majority to change the rules. If so, I might as well not start. If it took a simple majority then there was great hope, because if the thirty-nine states don't want something to happen, you start with the majority in your favor.



Shirpser: I thought the thing to do was to call our parliamentarian, who was Congressman Clarence Cannon, from Missouri. Missouri was one of the states that was going to lose four votes.

I phoned him. I explained what I had in mind to do, which was to keep the status quo as it existed for those thirty-nine states, and to give the bonus of four votes to the nine Southern states. Obviously, they deserved the bonus. They had gone Democratic. I asked him what he thought of my plan.

He said that he thought it was a great idea, and he was not thinking only of Missouri, I'm sure. Then I asked, "How will you rule as parliamentarian? Will it take a simple majority?"

He said, "Certainly. That's our rule." I said, "All right. I'll go to work."

Chall: Now, this is a majority in the National Committee?

Shirpser: Yes. There are two members from each state.

We discussed what I might do, and I said I had thought that I would write to the thirty-nine states first, that stood to lose four votes, and explain to them what I had in mind and ask for their favorable consideration.

I'd like to read you some excerpts from the letter I wrote. This letter went to both the national committeeman and the national committeewoman in each of the thirty-nine states. It explained what I was trying to do.

I'm sure the people I wrote to knew what I was implying, without putting it in writing, that I was trying to prevent the additional power and influence of the Southern states in the forthcoming national convention. I got very favorable responses. When I didn't hear from some National Committee members, I got on the long distance phone at my own expense, and talked to them, and explained, and answered questions. The response was excellent.

I'm not sure that I ever contacted the nine Southern states. They were going to get the bonus, anyway, so there wasn't much point, and I didn't want to stir up opposition. I knew when I got to the National Committee meeting that I could explain to them better, in person.



Shirpser: After I received the favorable ruling from Parliamentary Cannon, and sent my letters to National Committee members, I immediately sent a letter to Paul Ziffren, my colleague in Southern California, including my resolution and a copy of the letter I was sending to everyone.

I wrote, "I imagine that you will agree with the purpose of this, and that you will want to sign it with me, which I will be glad to have you do. I've done all the work, and from the response I'm getting, I'm sure we're going to carry it. I think it would have a much better effect if the two National Committee members of California do jointly sponsor it, and I would be glad to have you do so."

I did not receive a reply.

Chall: And did you notify Paul Butler of what you were doing?

Shirpser: I did. I sent a copy of my letter, the resolution, and the fact that I asked Paul Ziffren to sign it with me, and mentioned that I had not yet heard from him. But, in any case I intended to present this resolution at the next National Committee meeting. I did not receive a reply from Paul Butler.

I arrived at the National Committee meeting. I had already informed Chairman Paul Butler by mail that I was going to introduce the resolution, so I was on record. Then, I went up to him before the meeting began and I said, "At what point in the meeting shall I introduce this resolution?"

He said, "At the end of the meeting under new business. But don't be too disappointed if you don't carry it because I don't think they're going to vote for it."

I said, "I have a majority right here in my hand in these letters from National Committee members who are supporting me. Why do you think it won't carry?" He said, "Well, it's a pretty drastic change."

I said, "It's a change for the better, so why not make it?" He said, "Surely. At the end of the meeting under new business I'll recognize you."

Edgar Brown, who was the national committeeman from South Carolina, was the prototype of Southern statesmen. He was tall, and erect; he was an older man with thick white hair, very handsome, very courtly, very much a gentleman of the old school. I had noticed that when there was an important resolution to be





Shirpser: given, usually Edgar Brown was chosen to give that resolution.

He had great prestige in the National Committee. He had been on it for many years. He was a state senator in South Carolina and the dean of the legislature.

By sheer coincidence and good luck, he sat down next to me. We talked very amiably until the meeting started. As the meeting was continuing, Paul Ziffren got to his feet, was recognized by Paul Butler, and made my resolution with a few minor changes! I gasped out loud!

So, Edgar Brown said, "What's wrong, Clara?" I said, "He's stolen my resolution! He's giving my resolution!" Edgar swore for the first and only time I've ever heard him swear. He said, "Explain this to me very quickly." Then he got to his feet immediately.

Chall: You hadn't told him prior to the meeting? It was just at that point?

Shirpser: I had not told him until Paul Ziffren gave my resolution! I couldn't have gotten to my feet to protest! I was stunned and shocked beyond belief!

Edgar Brown stood up and said, "Mr. Chairman." Paul Butler recognized him immediately. Paul Ziffren was still on his feet. Edgar said, "I have a question I wish to ask the gentleman from California," (with sarcastic emphasis on the word "gentleman") and he pulled a paper out of his pocket and he opened it.

Edgar said, "I have here a letter from my very dear and admired colleague, the Democratic National Committeewoman from California, and she asked me to support her resolution." I hadn't written to him, because his was one of the nine Southern states that had earned the bonus of four votes.

So, he was pulling this paper out of his pocket which wasn't even my letter. But it was most effective. He said, "Sir, is the resolution you just made Mrs. Shirpser's resolution?"

Well, I have never heard anyone accuse, before or since, as Edgar Brown accused Ziffren in a National Committee meeting. Ziffren got very red in the face, and he sputtered and he said, "Well, part of it is."



Shirpser: Edgar said, "Did I hear you give credit to Mrs. Shirpser for that resolution which she drafted and which she sent all over the United States and for which received much support?"

Paul said, "Well, only part of it is her resolution." Edgar said, "Sir, did you ask her if she would accept amendments to her resolution?" Paul said, "No, I didn't."

He said, "Did you receive a copy of her resolution from Mrs. Shirpser?" Ziffren answered: "I don't remember."

Well, at that point Edgar looked at him like you were looking at a bug under a microscope, from his height, and he said, "Well, sir. It appears to me that the main part of your resolution is Mrs. Shirpser's resolution. I have pledged her my word to support it and I want the National Committee to know that I am supporting Mrs. Shirpser's resolution."

Pandemonium broke out. Jack Arvey quickly seconded the motion which Paul had introduced, and someone called for the vote to be taken. Everybody was talking at once!

Many members said to me later, "Why didn't you go up there and denounce Ziffren?" I said, "Well, Edgar Brown did it for me. It was so much more effective when he did it." It was a closed meeting; no press was there.

The resolution was carried by a large majority and it went into the record as Ziffren's resolution. Later I received clippings from friends in Southern California with headlines on the front page, and it was also reported in the Northern California press, "Ziffren saves California's four delegate votes."

It is true that there were amendments, but they were amendments I would have gladly supported. One of them was to give delegates half votes, so there would be twice as many. This really was not the sense of my motion at all, but it was a change of the rules and was one that I would support.

The only amendment that changed the sense of my motion was to add that, where a state had elected a Democratic governor, they would get a bonus of four votes. But that was a minor change. It didn't affect many states, and obviously was something I would have approved, too.



Shirpser: But I was not consulted on this at all by Ziffren. As soon as the meeting was over, everybody rushed up to me. I wouldn't like the things said about me that they said about Paul Ziffren, believe me.

I went up to Paul Butler afterwards and I said to him, "Why did you double-cross me like this? You told me not to introduce that resolution until the end of the meeting. And yet you recognized Paul to make that resolution, and you knew he was giving my resolution because I'd put you on notice. I wrote to you, and then I told you in person before this meeting started."

He said something then, which later was confirmed in a letter. I want to quote from the letter I wrote to him protesting his action discriminating against me, and the reply I got from him: "Well, the main thing is that you got what you worked for, didn't you? What's the difference who gets credit for it?"

Chall: I thought that was a very icy reply to your letter.

Shirpser: I had to go to a public stenographer to have those letters written on stationery I purchased. I paid the postage. I made the phone calls back and forth from San Francisco to many other states. I worked very hard because I thought this was worthwhile. Of course, I was glad that no matter who made the motion, it was accepted and became part of the 1956 convention rules.

But surely fair play demands that the person who has done all the work should have that resolution identified as hers, and that the man that has done nothing but hijack her resolution, after receiving it, should not be given the credit for having accomplished it.

Naturally, the national committeemen and committeewomen talked to the press after the meeting. Matt McCloskey was one of the most vociferous.

Chall: Did this in any way hurt Ziffren in the National Committee, or in California?

Shirpser: Well, it did with the people who knew about it. But the people who only read that he saved four votes naturally thought he had accomplished this.



## Press Reaction

Shirpser: However, Ruth Finney, who was the San Francisco News staff correspondent, wrote in her column "Calling California" quite a definitive explanation of what had happened. I did not tell her. She quotes State Senator Edgar Brown, who was South Carolina's national committeeman, and also states that I had shown the resolution to Chairman Butler and was told that I could propose the resolution at the end with new business, but that Ziffren was one of the first people in the committee recognized by Chairman Butler. "And to the visible surprise of other committee members, he offered Mrs. Shirpser's resolution as his own."

After all, the majority of the members there knew that it was my resolution. "So, as Butler was about to put it to a vote Senator Brown got up to protest. He told the meeting that this was Mrs. Shirpser's plan, and he knew it to be such and was supporting it as such.

"Mrs. Shirpser remained silent during the discussion, and refrained from press comment afterwards. Some of her friends here wondered if the Ziffren-Butler play was an elaborate form of punishing her for staying out of the Draft Stevenson move earlier that year."

I think the reason that I didn't publicly protest was because I was physically incapable of doing it right then. It was such a dirty double cross that I could not believe my ears when this was happening. If Edgar Brown hadn't been sitting next to me and made the protest for me, I don't know if I could have gotten up without being too emotional and breaking down.

[Interview 12, February 7, 1973]

Shirpser: Friends in California read the Ruth Finney article, and without telling me, they had a reprint made, and sent it to the California congressional delegation, Democratic office holders in the legislature, and in the Democratic party structure, and to members of the Democratic National Committee. They signed it "Friends of Clara Shirpser."





From San Francisco News, November 25, 1955

## Calling California

By Ruth Finney, The News Staff Correspondent



FINNEY

WASHINGTON, Nov. 25.

News out of Chicago did not credit Clara Shirpsen, Democratic committeewoman from California, with originating the bonus-delegate plan for the next convention adopted by the national committee but the story is told by Democrats who attended the closed-door business sessions.

### Demo Rewards

Several months ago, Mrs. Shirpsen wrote other members of the national committee about an idea she had for revising the bonus-delegate system so that no state would lose delegates, yet those showing recent Democratic strength would be rewarded.

In brief, the plan called for giving four bonus delegates to any state that went Democratic in 1952 (there were only nine), or to any state electing a Democratic governor since then (there have been 27), or a Democratic senator (22).

### Final Version

Mrs. Shirpsen got cordial responses so she drafted detailed recommendations, circularized the entire national committee at her own expense, and was given the go-ahead signal by Chairman Paul Butler. She sent her plan to her fellow Californian, Paul Ziffren, but received no reply in spite of

the general enthusiasm elsewhere for her proposal.

At Chicago, Mrs. Shirpsen worked with South Carolina's national committeeman, State Senator Edgar A. Brown, in polishing up the final version of her resolution, then showed it to Chairman Butler and was told she should propose the resolution when "miscellaneous" business was reached on the committee agenda.

But when it did, Ziffren was among the first members recognized by Chairman Butler. To the visible surprise of other committeemen, he offered Mrs. Shirpsen's resolution as his own. As Butler was about to put it to a vote, Senator Brown got up to protest. He told the meeting this was Mrs. Shirpsen's plan, and he knew it to be such, because he had worked on it with her.

### Ziffren Defends Self

Butler, according to the story told here, said he thought the question of authorship unimportant, and Ziffren defended himself by stating he had made some minor changes in the resolution.

Mrs. Shirpsen is said to have remained silent during the discussion and to have refrained from comment afterward. But some of her friends here have wondered whether the Ziffren-Butler play was an elaborate form of punishing her for staying out of the draft-Stevenson move. She has taken the position that party officials should wait for primary action on candidates ~~before~~ declaring their preferences.



Shirpser: I was glad that friends wanted to do that for me. I thought that this was a story that should have been told.

The Oakland Tribune made an even stronger statement in an editorial that covered one whole column and part of another in the Sunday edition which has their largest coverage. Again, I had not talked to them. So, they got the information from various people whose sense of fair play was outraged.

The Oakland Tribune states that "credit for the new plan for bonus votes for the 1956 national convention was assigned to Paul Ziffren, Democratic National Committeeman for California. And this, the Knave is told, "represented one of the neatest little double crosses in recent political history." That's pretty strong language, but I think it was justified.

Then he tells the story of the work I'd done for many weeks to get support for this resolution; that I'd cleared my proposal before the meeting with the Democratic National Chairman, Paul Butler, who said to bring it up under new business at the end of the meeting.

"When Ziffren jumped up and made the motion for this bonus plan vote, eyebrows popped up all over the room. And finally Ziffren was forced to admit that the plan was the one developed by Mrs. Shirpser for which she had gotten approval from other National Committee members, with only minor changes."

They further state that "Butler blandly suggested the question of authorship as of little moment. And the Shirpser-created-Ziffren-hijacked-program was approved. Quite a few National Committee members came away from the session with the idea that their National Chairman and Ziffren had teamed up to chastise Mrs. Shirpser because she holds to the view that National Committee members should await the primary election decisions and give candidates a chance to compete before the whole party was stamped into the Stevenson camp.

"They didn't like the tactics of the 'palace guard.' This maneuver frankly outraged their sense of fair play. What some Democrats deemed another slap at Mrs. Shirpser was a suggestion last week by Roger Kent, vice-chairman of the Democratic State Committee, that the national committeemen of the party be selected not by the presidential convention delegates as they now are and have been historically, but by the Executive Committee of the State Central Committee.



Shirpser: "One possible reason for this suspicion was that an identical proposal was made six months ago by Ziffren without prior consultation with Mrs. Shirpser. This is par for the course for him, seemingly. So much opposition to this plan developed that Ziffren withdrew his idea.

"But it was advanced again at a recent conference of State Central Committee leaders. And the scheme was voted down. Mrs. Shirpser and John Anson Ford were chosen to the Democratic National Committee by California's 1952 Kefauver delegation. Ziffren was named by the Executive Committee of the State Central Committee to the National Committee to succeed Ford when the latter resigned.

"The question to some observers was why, if they are convinced of a Stevenson win in California as they profess to be, Kent and Ziffren are now apparently afraid to let the selection of committeemen to continue to rest with the presidential delegation.

"An interesting sidelight is that California congressmen are not on the Executive Committee of the Democratic State Central Committee. They would therefore be denied a voice in the selection of their National Committee members. Congressmen usually are on the delegation, which elects the National Committeemen, under our present system.

"The Knave is told that the congressmen won't hold still for the Kent-Ziffren plan. There are others who believe that a delegation elected by the delegates to the National Convention has more right to select the state's representatives in the National Committee than do members of the State Central Committee who are, for the most part, appointees, whereas the delegation is elected."

That article created a lot of comment, too, as you can imagine. I mailed both Ruth Finney's column (which was given to me when I returned home. I hadn't seen it until then), and the Oakland Tribune editorial to Paul Butler so he could realize the reaction in the press to the way he had wishanded my resolution in the National Committee meeting.



## Shirpser-Butler Correspondence

Shirpser: I received a very (to say the least) unsatisfactory reply about a month later. My letter to Paul stated that I had not spoken to the press and that I had not given out the material for these articles.

I also wrote something to Paul Butler which I think needed to be said. "From the beginning of my political career I have always worked fairly, in the open, and through designated channels. You did not answer my letter in which I gave you the details of my resolution, as you were entitled to be notified. I did the same with my so-called colleague, Paul Ziffren, and gave him the opportunity to sign this with me, making this a united action, even though I had done all the preliminary work. I also received a favorable vote from the Democratic State Central Committee meeting when I brought up this plan. They voted for approval also. My plan was officially that of the California State Democratic party."

"So, I came to the National Committee meeting with official backing, as well as my own efforts. I came to you as the chairman of the Democratic National Committee and reported that this resolution was ready to be introduced by me. Tracy McKraken, who was the Democratic National Committeeman from Wyoming, had independently worked on a plan of his own. But he answered my letter and told me that he would like to work with me on this. I was delighted to cooperate with him in the wording of the resolution.

"Since our meeting I have conferred with an expert on parliamentary law, who assures me that it is the responsibility of the chairman who has been put on notice, that a member of his committee intends to make a motion and that motion is explained to the chairman (who is you); then it is the responsibility of the chairman to challenge another member of the committee who tries to make the same motion.

"He said that in such a case the chairman (who is you) should report to the committee that he had previously been informed that another member had placed him on notice that she wished to make such a motion. If you had taken this course of action the National Committee members would have been aware that Mr. Ziffren, without consulting with me, after being informed by me of my plan, was pre-empting my plan. In spite of all the effort I had put into it and the support which I





Shirpsen: mobilized, you allowed him to make his motion, which you knew was mine.

"I realize that Paul Ziffren added a couple of minor changes; however, I would have been glad to accept those amendments. After the meeting I spoke to Mr. Arvey about this motion. He said that he had forgotten about my letter, but since he had written to me about it the previous week, his memory was obviously getting very short. He volunteered the information that he had asked Paul Ziffren to make this resolution in spite of the fact that he knew it was my plan.

"As far as I know, and as I told him at the time, Mr. Jack Arvey is a national committeeman with the same responsibilities and privileges as any other member of the committee. When I asked him if he did not think it was Paul Ziffren's responsibility and duty to confer with me, he readily admitted that I was absolutely correct regarding this motion.

"I tried to cooperate fully with you in every way. I am deeply disappointed in your attitude towards me. Not only in this, but recently you came to California without even notifying me of your plans or attempting to get in touch with me during your visit. To say the least, this was uncooperative.

"While it's true that your visit was to Southern California, I must remind you that I was elected committeewoman for the whole state, not just for Northern California. This is information you must know, having served as a National Committee member. It was embarrassing to have the press call me and ask me your plans in California when I didn't even know that you intended to come to our state.

"It is your responsibility to check with me when you come to California. In contrast, I very much appreciate the attitude of Bill Blair, who since my return has phoned me and written to me and cleared with me several speaking engagements for Governor Stevenson for California in the early spring, all over California.

"I appreciate Bill's cooperation and I assured him that we are always happy to have Governor Stevenson whenever he wants to come to California. I had this morning joined with Alan Cranston in a press release in making such a statement regarding Adlai Stevenson's upcoming visit.



Shirpser: "I shall continue to work for the best interests of the Democratic party to the best of my ability. I shall continue to exercise fair play and cooperation, and I shall expect it from you in return.

"I'm sending this communication to the Mayflower Hotel office instead of to your own office for very obvious reasons. For the best interests of the Democratic party and for unity, whenever it is possible, sincerely, Clara Shirpser."

Chall: You got an unresponsive cold reply.

Shirpser: Yes, I did. Well, his reply was so evasive and so lacking in answering the facts of this that I think that it should go into the record.

He says, "Your successive letters of November 30 and December 15 have come to my attention. Upon my return on December 12, many important matters required my attention. (Evidently, he didn't consider my resolution to change the rules of the National Committee important.) As a result I have just had time to digest your letters. I regret you were put out with the developments at Chicago.

"I'm sure you know that I receive hundreds of letters here each week and it isn't possible to see all of them." Now this, I resent very much. After all, there were only a hundred members of the Democratic National Committee, and the chairman is obligated to read the correspondence that comes from his members! This is one of the basic duties of the chairman. I wasn't just a member of a precinct organization writing to him. I was a member of the Democratic National Committee who helped to elect him. I have his letter saying how much my support meant to him at the time of his election. I think it is insulting that he didn't have time to read my letters because he had too much to do!

He also says, "I have no recollection of having seen your early letter suggesting a revised apportionment of delegates prior to the Chicago meeting. I'm sure if I had seen it it would not have been sufficiently impressed upon my mind to have stopped Paul Ziffren from presenting his resolution." [Emphasis added] In fact, even if he had read it he wouldn't have cared about fair play or justice.

He completely ignores the fact that not only did I write him, but that I went up to him just before the meeting started.



Shirpser: He could not possibly have forgotten it. Then I handed him a copy of my resolution, and he completely ignored that and did not reply to that statement of mine.

And this is the coup de grace: "In any event, Clara, if the end result of your suggestion and Paul's resolution as adopted is good for the party the important thing is that the good has been achieved and not who gets the credit for it. I'm sure you will agree with me on this point."

I wish to register that I do not agree with him on this point.

So, he just evaded the important things and tried to excuse himself. He doesn't refer to the parliamentary law, which he by-passed, too. He just skips it.

#### Paul Ziffren and the Democratic Party

Shirpser: I thought a great deal about this, but I think I should tell some of the things that have made Paul Ziffren an embarrassment to the Democratic party in California, from time to time.

You know the story of some of our most prominent Democrats, such as former Governor Olsen, who said that "Ziffren was trying to destroy the Democratic party as it exists to increase his own influence and to adopt Boss tactics that he grew up with in Chicago."

The Dime-a-Day people, many of whom held party position, feel that he insulted Liz Snyder, that he insulted the heads of that group by his attempt to sabotage it.

They resented it and they gave reasons why. All these clippings had front page coverage. These were people who also held positions in the CDC as well as the party organization. One of them was Amerigo Bozzani, who was the treasurer of the CDC at the founding convention.

He had very strong criticism of Paul Ziffren. Later, Harold Lane (to whom they refer in this clipping), the administrative assistant and California representative of Congressman Chet Holifield, also publicly criticized Paul Ziffren. He was speaking with some authority, too. These were California Democratic



Shirpsen: political leaders.

One of the things that was embarrassing and got national coverage was the Reader's Digest article of July, 1960. It was written by Lester Velie and is called, "Paul Ziffren, The Democrats' Man of Mystery." (The author sets forth a very detailed account of "Ziffren's connections with the underworld and gambling figures of the period.")

As far as I know, none of this has been refuted. I don't believe the Reader's Digest was sued by Paul Ziffren. If so, I am not aware of it.

In the 1956 primary, Paul Ziffren attacked Estes Kefauver. Estes thought that this couldn't remain unchallenged. Estes had to refute some of the things Paul Ziffren was saying, and to refer to actual factual, evidence which he had on the public record, critical of Paul Ziffren's record.

I have letters here from various assembly districts asking Paul Ziffren to resign. I have much more information about the difficulty of working with him, which I tried very hard to do in the beginning. But, as the evidence shows, during these interviews, it was impossible.

He by-passed me; he ignored me; he hijacked my resolution. It was impossible to work cooperatively with him. As a final note to Paul Ziffren; he ran for reelection as Democratic National Committeeman (I believe it was in 1958) when Pat Brown ran for governor. Paul Ziffren had not helped Pat Brown, according to what Pat told me, but he actually put roadblocks in his way.

I don't know the reason for this. But Pat Brown was incensed about Paul Ziffren. Pat Brown urged Stanley Mosk, who was then a judge in Southern California (and a very good friend of mine with whom I always enjoyed working), to run for national committeeman against Paul Ziffren, who was seeking reelection.\*

Obviously I was glad to help Stanley Mosk for all good reasons. Because I knew he would be a national committeeman who would bring prestige and excellence to California. I think I was a help to him in defeating Paul Ziffren. He wrote me, certainly,

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\*Stanley Mosk was elected national committeeman in 1960.





Shirpser: to that effect.

I've wished that Stanley had been national committeeman when I was national committeewoman because we would have worked together cooperatively to accomplish many things that needed doing, as was true when John Anson Ford was national committeeman. So, things changed very much for the better in the California Democratic party after Stanley Mosk became California's national committeeman.

Chall: Except by that time you were...

Shirpser: I was no longer national committeewoman.



X JOINING ESTES KEFAUVER: PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1956  
PRIMARY CAMPAIGN

[Interview 12, February 7, 1973]

Testing Eisenhower's Strength

Shirpser: There's something more pleasant about which I'd like to tell you. A letter that I wrote to Governor Stevenson, to which I had a delightful reply. I'd had a visit with him and with Bill Blair in their new law offices in Chicago. They had moved after Adlai's defeat in 1952. This letter is dated 1955. Whenever I was near Chicago in Skokie, visiting my daughter, I saw Adlai.

We had a very good talk. At some point we had been discussing President Eisenhower and the "pedestal" on which he was placed. I had just come back from Washington and had talked with several political writers. I often saw Drew Pearson when I was in Washington, Robert Allen and his wife, Ruth Finney, and sometimes Doris Fleeason. It was always a delight to be brought up to date on what they thought, and to receive needed information.

They kept telling me that it was going to be impossible to beat Eisenhower in 1956 (the next year). Of course, I told the reporters that I believed that the Democratic party could and would win in 1956, but secretly I was worried about what I had heard from them.

So, I was discussing with Adlai, as to whether this invulnerability of Ike's were true, or whether we were all allowing ourselves into being pressured into believing it was so. We discussed it at some length.

Before boarding the train for California I saw Adlai's splendid book, Call to Greatness, of which I'd already had a copy. But it occurred to me that if I carried that book on the



Shirpsen: train with a big picture of Adlai on both covers, it would lead to conversations that would give me an interesting cross section of what people were really thinking at that time.

I reported in my letter to Adlai about this cross section of opinion, on the cross-country train. There were people from twelve different states: a stove manufacturer, a cattleman, a school teacher, a salesman, a veteran just discharged, housewives, woman attorney, doctor, and some businessmen. I talked with the conductors and the porters, too.

My letter states: "No clear pattern emerges. But the most encouraging thing to me was the desire of people to express their opinions, and to hear their newly aroused interest in politics. So often before, I had been depressed by the indifference and apathy regarding politics. The most discouraging aspect of these conversations was the lack of information, or wrong information, on political issues, by people who were seemingly well educated and informed on other subjects.

"But when I took the time to ask pertinent questions and to explain a few facts on current issues, I found I got a sufficient response to make me feel that our discussion had been worthwhile. It made me realize anew how much the Democrats need equitable access to media of information."

I had discussed this with Paul Butler and hoped he would organize a committee to discuss ways and means of getting better publicity. I don't believe it was ever done.

"Many of the people with whom I talked on the train said they were independents and they repeated the familiar chant of which I'm so weary: 'I vote for the man and not the party.' But these people usually believed that Ike's advisors, not Ike himself, were at fault, when they disagreed with his policies. This made me believe that we have got to stop talking about the Benson farm policy and call it the Eisenhower farm policy.

"We have got to stop talking about McKay's power policy and call it the Eisenhower power policy. (I went down the line on these cabinet posts.) The majority of people with whom I talked, all over the country, blamed Ike's cabinet members rather than him. Many also told me that they did not like Ike's long appeasement of Senator Joseph McCarthy. They often remarked that Ike doesn't know what it's all about, when we spoke of domestic and foreign policy."



Shirpser: I'm skipping a great deal here of what I wrote to Adlai: "I'm sure that all of this is not in any way new to you, but I think it's time that we took Ike off that pedestal post where he gets full credit for everything good that he does, but his advisors bear the blame for his failures and mistakes. Surely it is the president's ultimate responsibility to decide policy, and his advisors were supposedly selected by him."

Then Adlai wrote me a letter in which he said that he completely agreed with me. He had talked with Clayton Fritchey who also wrote to me. Clayton Fritchey was then publishing the Democratic Digest. He wrote a good article about my ideas as expressed in my letter to Adlai.

Adlai wrote: "From here on, whenever I make a speech I'll talk about the Eisenhower farm policy, or the Eisenhower power policy, or the Eisenhower Dixon-Yates give-away. If I don't, please wire me immediately, because it will be a slip of the tongue." [Emphasis added.]

This gave me a great deal of satisfaction that I had been able to bring this idea to him.

This seems to be the time that we get to the "Stevenson Boom."

### The "Stevenson Boom" in California

Chall: So, now we're going to talk about this visit of Carmen De Sapia which really led to what you called the Stevenson Boom?

Shirpser: That's what it was called in the newspapers.

Chall: What happened? It was October of 1955?

Shirpser: I had heard from Carmine De Sapia that he was coming to speak in San Francisco on Columbus Day, October 12, and he would welcome meeting with Democratic party officials. He had his representative here, Thomas Campbell, phone me, too.

I wrote him saying that I was delighted he was to visit California, and added my own welcome, and that I would be glad to set up a reception for him with the party officials, and with any other people he wanted to meet. While he was coming





Shirpser: out here ostensibly to speak to the Italian-Americans, he was obviously coming out to test sentiment up and down California on the Averell Harriman candidacy, because Governor Harriman was definitely interested in the presidential race in '56.

Averell Harriman was a good friend of mine, and I'd always enjoyed working with him. I didn't know Carmen De Sapio well. I just knew that he was a colleague on the National Committee. Because of my friendship for Averell Harriman and as a matter of courtesy, I was glad to cooperate. I told him anything I could do to assure his visit being a success I'd be happy to do.

He was arriving on October 12. I was a member of a committee of nine, which was officially set up by the Democratic State Central Committee to try to choose a delegation for the 1956 convention.

This committee of nine was composed of Pat Brown, who was attorney-general, Paul Ziffren and I were National Committee members, Elizabeth Snyder was state chairman, Roger Kent was Northern California chairman and John Ennis was the Southern California vice-chairman.

Chall: And then Richard Richards?

Shirpser: I'm not sure if he was on this committee. I don't remember.

I think one congressman, possibly, and probably Alan Cranston as president of the clubs. I'm not sure, but there were nine top Democratic officials. What we were asked to do was to choose a delegation to keep things from going to pieces or splitting the party. Our theme was unity.

#### State Democratic Party Officials Urge Stevenson to Run for President

Shirpser: On October 11 we were conferring with each other by telephone in Northern and Southern California. I was informed that the eight other members were sending out wires to enlist the support of congressmen, state legislators, and other party officials, to urge Adlai Stevenson to run for president in the 1956 primary.

These were elected Democratic party officials, and they were using the offices of the State Central Committee in support of one candidate.



Chall: These other eight people?

Shirpser: Yes. They wanted me to join them in these telegrams. They knew how devoted I was to Adlai. I truly feel that my decision not to join them was based on principle. I must give you my press statement later because that gave my reasons.

No matter whom they had been choosing to support and to build up with this massive support--if it had been Estes--I would have reacted the same way. A primary election is an open contest among candidates who want to be president, or whatever office they're seeking. When you contact every congressional district co-chairman, every county committee chairman... And Alan signed a separate wire as president of the CDC to the presidents of two hundred clubs in California. You cannot logically say that you're acting as individuals as they claimed to be.

Also, the wires stated, "Kindly wire or phone your endorsement immediately." They wanted an answer in twenty-four hours.

Chall: What caused this? Who do you think was behind it?

Shirpser: Two things. I think these people were sincerely for Adlai Stevenson and wanted to show him that the whole California Democratic party was for him. I think it was intended to discourage Senator Kefauver from making the race in the California primary, and to discourage Averell Harriman's candidacy, too.

Remember this was October of 1955.

Chall: Just before De Sapio came into town.

Shirpser: I thought that the timing was unforgiveable. The week before, I received a letter from Paul Ziffren in which he informed me that De Sapio was coming, and that Paul was coming up to San Francisco to see him.

You don't welcome a man by hitting him over the head with a bandwagon rolling for another candidate! To me, it was the opposite of good taste. How can you welcome a man who represents Governor Harriman of New York, who might want to run for president, by a "slap in the face" the day he arrives by giving this Stevenson Boom statement to the press.



COPIES OF WIRES SENT MON. & TUES.  
Oct. 10 & 11

PAT BROWN, PAUL ZIFFRED, ELIZEBETH SNYDER, ROGER KENT PLAN  
WIRE ADLAI STEVENSON URGING HIM TO RUN AND PLEDGING SUPPORT.  
THEY ARE INVITING ALL CONGRESSMEN, SENATORS, ASSEMBLYMEN,  
COUNTY COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT CO-  
CHAIRMEN WHO WISH TO JOIN WITH THEM TO DO SO IN THE BELIEF  
THAT DEMOS HOLDING OTHER PARTY POSITIONS SHOULD BE GIVEN  
THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE SUPPORT FOR STEVENSON AT THIS  
TIME IF THEY WISH TO DO SO.

I AM WIRING CLUB AND COUNCIL PRESIDENTS AND DIRECTORS TO ASK  
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SIGN A PARALLEL PLEDGE TO BE RELEASED  
SIMULTANEOUSLY. ADVISE ME BY WIRE AT 212 SUTTER ST., S.F.

ALAN CRANSTON

IN  
WE ARE JOINING WITH LIZ SNYDER, PAUL ZIFFEREN AND ELECTED  
OFFICIALS NORTH AND SOUTH IN A TELEGRAM TO BE SENT GOVERNOR  
STEVENSON ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13th, WHICH PRAISES HIS LEADER\*  
SHIP, URGES HIM TO SEEK THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION AND REQUESTS  
HIM TO ENTER THE CALIFORNIA PRIMARY AND PROMISES HIM OUR SUP-  
PORT. WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN WITH US. PLEASE WIRE YOUR ACCEPT\*  
ANCE TO ROGER KENT TO BE RECEIVED BY WEDNESDAY 4:00 P.M., OCT. 12.

PAT BROWN  
CLAIR ENGLE  
ROGER KENT



Shirpser: Also, in the wire they said to send their replies by phone or by wire to the Democratic State Central Committee, Northern California headquarters, at 212 Sutter Street. Now this brings up a question, not only of ethics, but the spirit and intent of the primary in California. It also brings up a question of legality.

The State Central Committee is supported by Democrats from all over the state of California. We all contribute to that support. This includes rent, heat, light, water, telephone, postage, printing, and personnel. If you're using the Democratic headquarters and the services of all those people, how can you say that it is not an official Democratic party action?

Chall: And they claimed that it wasn't official.

Shirpser: Yes, they claimed that it wasn't official. They claimed that they were acting as individuals. Paul Ziffren's action didn't surprise me. But I was surprised that Liz Snyder would claim that it was an individual action when she was state Democratic chairman and she was using the state Democratic headquarters for replies to be sent and checked.

In fact, one attorney in Southern California and two in Northern California called me and said that this action was breaking the law. They said that they would give me their services, they would carry all the court costs, that as I was the Democratic National Committeewoman who was refusing to join this Draft Stevenson movement, they wanted me to bring the suit.

I couldn't do that, chiefly because of my devotion to Adlai. I never once did anything anti-Stevenson. I was truly uncommitted at this point. I didn't know if Estes was going to run. I didn't know what I would do if he decided to run.

Another bad timing aspect of this was that Estes was in Japan. He was making a world tour to inform himself about world conditions and problems. He had not made up his mind what he was going to do about the presidential race in 1956. I know this from his letters and his own personal conversations with me.

So, I cabled Estes in Japan to tell him that I was the only member of that California committee of nine, of which he knew, who was not signing these wires and that they were getting a tremendous response. I thought the whole state party machinery was being wound up behind Stevenson. I thought that he ought to be aware of this.





Shirpser: Estes phoned me from Tokyo. I explained the whole situation to him. If he decided to run, this would be a serious roadblock in his path. Many of the Kefauver delegates of 1952, people I had worked with in '52, like Sam Gardner, David Freidenrich, and John Anson Ford, etc. had signed these wires of support for Adlai.

So, I had to play this lone role, which was one of the most difficult parts in my life. If there's a good candidate and a bad candidate, then you have a clear choice. I wouldn't have joined with them, even then. But when they're two people for whom you have the greatest admiration, respect, and affection, it's agonizing to make a decision like that.

I couldn't sleep for many nights. I really was suffering at the choice which was thrust upon me. My position got front page coverage. There are about fifty clippings here from different newspapers' front pages, mostly in which it always states that I was the only state-wide official who did not sign, and gave my reasons for not signing this wire. I must read from my press release, because later when I did make a decision, some people said that I really hadn't meant what I originally said. But I made it very clear that once the candidates have been given the time and the opportunity to enter the primary election, then I would make a choice.

Carmine De Sapio arrived late in the evening of October 11. I went over before breakfast the next morning to see him, because I wanted him to know at once what was going on. The press conference was being held later that morning with this committee of nine (minus me), plus many other people supporting Adlai.

Chall: What about Alan Cranston and his actions?

Shirpser: Later he said that many of the clubs were polled. But can you tell me how two hundred club presidents could get their wires back in twenty-four hours and poll their members first? I've got to see how that's done.

Then they said that they were only signing up as individuals and not club presidents. But their bylaws, which I checked, plainly state that you cannot endorse or support a candidate for any office who is not chosen by the clubs in convention, either district conventions or state conventions.

I think it hurt the Democratic party in California to act in this way because there were many critical editorials. The Tribune



Oct. 25, 1955.

Senator Estes Kefauver  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Estes:

Thank you so much for calling me yesterday, and for talking with me so frankly, and for the privilege and honor you asked me to assume. I've done a good deal of soul-searching in the past few weeks, trying to decide what my responsibilities really are, what I ought to do, rather than what I might want to do. Perhaps you are aware that I have never urged you to make this race, not because of any lack of confidence in you, but because I thought that you alone could decide whether it is worth what it entails in sacrifice, exhaustion, tension, etc., and whether you have a reasonably good chance for victory. I know how much pressure surrounds you, and I did not want to add my little bit to it. Basically, too, I have been aware of what your decision would do to my own life because I have never once doubted where I would go if you wanted and needed me. (I received another call from Pat Brown this morning... it seems that "they" believe that I would add strength to their ticket, and if I ever decide to join with them, I would be welcomed enthusiastically and everything I might want would be done, etc. etc. etc. Don't worry, I know their motivation and how steadfast these assurances would be.) Now that you have decided, and I'm sure that you have weighed all the factors and done your share of soul-searching with Nancy's help, from the depths of my mind and heart I wish you the victory you deserve on the basis of your great qualifications for this most important office in the whole world, and I promise to do everything that I know how to do to support you. I wish that I were able to do so much more than I am capable of doing. It will be a joy, and it is good to feel about "my" candidate as I do about you, knowing your great record, your courage, strength, and integrity, your objectivity and wisdom, and your wonderful rapport with the people. Remember my story about the navy commander, a conservative Republican, who was for you and when I asked him "why", he said: "I trust him!" The theme of your campaign might well be: "The people trust him", (and that includes me.) I haven't meant this as flattery, but I so often have to tell you unpleasant facts, that I wanted to reiterate how I feel about you and Nancy; and I realize what this means to her, and I think she is such a great asset in your campaign with her poise, wit, friendliness, and so good-looking, too! And your four wonderful children will all be in there "pitching and corraling votes."

With my best to you always,

Sincerely,

Ad joins me in all that I have written; we discussed this fully, and it's fortunate that he is so co-operative in wanting me to do what I believe I should, and in his belief in you, too.





# Calif. Stevenson Boom Explodes

The Stevenson - for - President boom exploded in California last week. In almost simultaneous announcements all over the state generally hundreds of top-ranking democrats - elected officials, county and county officers and roots leaders - announced their support of Stevenson and urged him, in telegrams and letters, to announce his candidacy.

The announcements came in four batches: 1. By Elizabeth Snyder, state chairman, in a press conference here. 2. By Alan Anderson and Glean Anderson, chairman and vice-chairman of

the California Democratic Council and scores of council and club officials. 3. By Atty. Gen. Pat Brown in San Francisco. 4. By a large group of Hollywood movie and TV industry people. All announcements were made last Thursday. Mrs. Snyder released her list of more than 100 names, including Congressmen, Assemblymen, State Senators and Paul Ziffren, National Commit-

to man, at a press conference in the Clark Hotel. The telegram to Stevenson said:

"It is our conviction that the people of the United States will overwhelmingly agree that your

ideals your vision and your love of America are needed as seldom before in American history to insure prosperity, promote and selfish national aspirations and give substance to the people's dream of universal peace."

Both Ziffren and Mrs. Snyder stressed that all signatories, including themselves, were acting "as individuals" not as party officials.

The telegram from the California Democratic Council and club officials said:

"We believe that you are the man to lead the Democratic Party in 1956. We believe that

you are the man to lead the United States to peace and prosperity under terms consistent with national honor and equal rights. We believe that you are the man to lead the world to a new era, free of fear of war and tyranny, and full of faith in freedom and human dignity and happiness."

It was signed by hundreds of club presidents and Congressional and Assembly district officers. Many signed only "as individuals" but others polled their clubs and councils for support of their entire organization.

The announcements were made the same day Tammy Hall chief Carmine De Sapio, Gov. Averell Harriman's lieutenant, was visiting in San Francisco.

Ziffren, Brown, Tom Carroll, leader of the Kefauver-for-President movement here, and others met with De Sapio, apparently to fill him in on local sentiment. Harriman has indicated he will enter no presidential primaries outside of New York.

Brown said he told De Sapio that Harriman has good secondary strength in California but that Stevenson obviously was first choice.

The Hollywood-for-Stevenson committee wired Stevenson: "No man in public life today offers so intelligent a devotion to world peace, human rights, and economic justice . . . we pledge you, in the coming campaign, our hearts, our brains, and our professional talents."

Signers included Lauren Bacall, Louis Calhern, Norman O. Wright, Martin Galt, Moss Hart, F. Hugh Herbert, Stanley Kramer, Mercedes McCambridge, I. M. Pinneret, Dore Schary, Mrs. Lee Spain, Gene Wilder, Jerry Wald, Billy Wilder and others.

## Mrs. FDR For Adlai

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt this week announced she would support Adlai Stevenson for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1956. She said he was "best trained, best qualified and best prepared" for the job. She supported him in 1952 also.

Another group which signed the same telegram included Steve Zetterberg, Judge Isaac Pacht, Amerigo Bozzani and Mrs. Beatrice Rosenus.

Top leadership in the club movement signed the telegram to Stevenson. They included Goldie Kennedy, Ben Held, Ed Wilson, Fred Zweiback, Toby Ocas, Rudy Pacht, Mrs. Freddie Kurloff, John Gaffney, Bob Gold, Joseph Katz;

Miriam Golf, Newell Barrett, Ivan Stone, Robert Joseph, Willard Sward, Lowell Bulger, Fred Gobel, Fay Gault, Alex Okrand, and F. C. Skurter and Harold Starr.

Mrs. Snyder's list included three Congressmen—Chet Holifield, Clair Engle and John E. Moss Jr.; 11 Assemblymen—Thomas G. Doyle, Edward M. Gaffney, Edward E. Elliott, Augustus F. Hawkins, Vernon Kilpatrick, Lester A. McMillan, Eugene G. Nisbet, John O'Connell, Byron Rumford, Vincent Thomas and Carley Porter; and seven State Senators—Richard Richards, James A. Owey, Fred Fary, Luther E. Gibson, Robert T. Montgomery, Warren J. Rogers and Alan Short.

Also Richard Cartwright, Steve Clinton, John Dangel, F. F. Furbush, Fredrick Traft, Joseph Wagner, Donald Younger and Lloyd Stenberg.



Shirpser: used a whole column in which they wrote of the Democratic clubs, that hundreds of chairmen signed the telegraphic plea and yet they had not polled their members.

In fact, the Tribune wrote that the Executive Committee of the California Democratic Council, the parent body of the clubs, wasn't even consulted. When you act in that way to stampede people, you create much disunity. Many letters were written to me, all of which praised me for not being stampeded, and understood why I was doing it.

Even some of the Stevenson people thought that I had done the right thing. Of course, the Kefauver people naturally would think so. From the Oakland Tribune again, "We wonder about the feelings of the congressmen and state legislators who might have felt bound by an earlier agreement to go for a slate to be selected by a committee of nine top Democratic leaders."

They also wrote that a number of leading Democrats didn't sign the wire like George Killion and Cyril Magnin. To reporters who called me I told that I had received many congratulatory messages for my stand against this premature pressure.

Clippings are here, by the dozen, so I won't go into those further.

Chall: Can you give me any information as to why people like Killion, and Magnin, and Nicholson, and even George Miller didn't go along with that?

Shirpser: I assume that they didn't think this was the way a primary campaign should be conducted. I had a strong statement from John B. Elliott, who has been called "Mr. Democrat," because of his many years of Democratic leadership in California.

He sent me his original press release. He always was awfully nice to work with; he was very experienced in politics, and a courtly gentleman. He always said that he admired the fact that I had courage when a crisis came.

His press release stated: "The members who are doing this are lending themselves to the prejudicial use of the official party organization in an open party primary favoring one Democratic candidate for office against any and all other Democratic candidates...Among their important official duties is the one requiring them to see that all candidates in





Shirpser: the primary have fair and impartial treatment. These party officials who now declare themselves for one particular candidate are not doing this. They are doing the opposite. They are violating the intent of the State Direct Primary Election laws.

"Evidently through a feeling of guilt on their part, or realizing their impropriety, they attempt to excuse their action by asserting that they are acting only as individuals. This they cannot do. They cannot distinguish themselves as private individuals from their status as party officials."

Then he speaks of using the Democratic headquarters for the return wires. "They also say by committing themselves this early to the candidacy of Adlai Stevenson, the distinguished Democrat from Illinois, prior to the state primary election, they also signified their opposition to the possible presidential candidacies of the U.S. Senator Kefauver from Tennessee, or Governor Averell Harriman of New York, and any other Democratic presidential candidates who may offer themselves in the California June 5 primary. This is an improper use of the official Democratic party machinery."

He also wrote a lovely letter to me praising me for what I had done, and sent a copy to the press, that got quite a bit of publicity. I wrote to Averell Harriman explaining what happened here, and I told him how sad and lonely I was in this row, and that I remembered that he had praised me for protesting Steve Mitchell's letter about Jimmy Roosevelt and Robert Condon in California; that I felt that this present situation was really exemplifying the same principles.

But this crisis was even more difficult because practically all of my friends had gone on the Stevenson slate, and I was the only statewide officer in California who hadn't done it. I felt that California primary laws were being negated; and as a matter of fact, when the whole party machinery is lined up behind one party candidate, it does pressure other candidates not to come in.

Chall: How did De Sapio react to all this while he was here?

Shirpser: Well, publicly he was a good sport. Privately, he was furious. I don't blame him a bit. He tried to persuade me to go to the press conference where the Stevenson "Boom" was being publicized; that I had a right as national committeewoman to be there. And he was so persuasive that I started for the Palace Hotel, where it



Shirpser: was going on, but when I got to the door, I turned around and left.

I couldn't bring myself to force my way into that room. I knew everyone there, and I knew what they were doing. But it seemed to me to be very bad taste on my part to go there and tell the press that I didn't agree with them.

Carmine De Sapio thought that I should, but I'm sure that there was some self-interest, too. It was embarrassing for him. He didn't say anything publicly except that it was too early to pick Democratic candidates.

When he got back to New York he also issued a statement that he felt that it was premature and he thought that it was pressuring one candidate to run, and therefore hurting others. But, when speaking to me privately, he was very angry. He was furious at Paul Ziffren who told him he was welcome and then headed the list to support Adlai, while Carmine was here.

I also wrote to Adlai and to Bill Blair, because this was painful for me. I told them that they knew they could trust me and I truly was not committed. I explained that I thought it was the wrong use of the primary election and to use the Democratic party headquarters for so-called individual action, and that I could not be a part to it. But I asked them to please believe that it was not because I was opposed to Adlai.

I received beautiful letters in reply from both of them. Bill Blair understood my position, but he said, "I would be less than frank if I did not tell you that we are delighted at the response we've gotten in California." And he ended the letter, "Come hell or highwater, we'll still remain friends." This made me feel better, because always in my relationship with him, there was a wonderful feeling that even when he didn't agree with me he knew I was doing what I believed to be right.

The Sacramento Bee had an editorial in which they said that they opposed this use of the primary election, and thought it was bound to discourage other candidates from entering. Time magazine had an article--

Chall: Now, you're quoting from--

Shirpser: My own press release. Later, I'll quote from a letter that I wrote to Lyn Fox, who was the political editor of the Call Bulletin, who said, in effect, in December, "See, she was for



Shirpser: Kefauver all the time..."

I answered him, and called his attention to this statement I issued on October 14: "At that time I explained that I did not join with other Democratic party officials in sending out hundreds of telegrams which covered all Democratic party officials, State Central Committee members, Democratic Club presidents, and so forth. I explained that I believe this action was premature in its pressure to support one candidate since neither he nor any other Democrat has announced his candidacy, nor declared his intention of entering the June, 1956 primary.

"I firmly believe that the purpose of the primary election law is to make it possible that a fair and open contest among candidates can take place within the party framework. Therefore, I am not now committed to any candidate and cannot conscientiously do so until all Democratic candidates have been given their opportunity to enter the California primary if they wish to do so, on a fair and equitable basis.

"I believe that it is not consistent with my responsibilities as national committeewoman for California, to take sides at this time, either to pressure a potential candidate into running, or to try to stop any other candidate from entering the California primary. I believe a political contest is healthy, and candidates should test their strength with the voters.

"After we know who enters the California primary I will then do my utmost to support the candidate who will, in my opinion, best lead our nation and strengthen our Democratic party in California.

"I believe that my actions have been consistent. Governor Stevenson declared his intention of entering the California primary in early December. Governor Averell Harriman stated that he would not enter any primaries. Senator Kefauver decided on December 16 that he would enter the California primary.

"Since they are the three leading Democratic candidates, I then felt free under the circumstances and at that time, in late December, under the conditions I had outlined on October 14 in my press release, to accept the honor and responsibility that Senator Kefauver entrusted to me." I spoke about him, and why I thought he would be a splendid president.



Shirpser: Then I told Lyn Fox, "At the last National Democratic meeting in Chicago the National Chairman, Paul Butler, discussed with the National Committee members his views on this question. He requested that all the officers [emphasis added] of the Democratic National Committee and the staff not to take sides in any contest. But he also stated that he believed National Committee members were completely free to support the candidate of their choice, and he hoped that they would do so."

This has long been a national tradition. So, I tried to make my own position perfectly clear, and I hope I did.

Chall: Now, what was Paul Butler's reaction to what happened here?

Shirpser: There was none, as far as I know. I didn't hear him say anything nor did he write to me regarding this California project. It was very discouraging to Senator Kefauver; Governor Harriman pulled out completely, as far as the primaries went.

Senator Kefauver said in his phone conversation to me, "All I ask is fair and impartial treatment, which is stated in the California primary laws, and ask not to be pressured out or frozen out." I sent that out as a press statement.

Clara Shirpser: Torn Between Loyalties to Kefauver and Stevenson

Shirpser: At the National Committee meeting, where all three candidates were, I had written ahead and asked to have a private conference with each of them. I truly was uncommitted when I went to that National Committee meeting in November.

Before that, Bill Blair had been in the Bay Area in August, 1955, and he had called me and asked me to have lunch with him. Of course, I knew why he was here. We had a very frank and full discussion of what the situation was in California. This was before the Stevenson bandwagon started rolling in October.

He came out here to talk to people in the Democratic party, and he spent some days in California. He thanked me in a later letter for giving so much time to him, and for the frank discussion we had, which he found valuable, and which he'd reported back to Governor Stevenson.





Shirpser: I told him of my quandry, that I'd come into politics with Estes Kefauver; that I had received from him the most wonderful devotion, and loyalty, and consideration, always, in every way; that I truly didn't know what I would do; that I was uncommitted and that I would be uncommitted until all the leading candidates had expressed their decisions about entering the California primary.

I repeated to him how much I thought of Adlai and how much I wanted to support him, but that I must face all the facts and then make my decision. Then he told me some wonderful things about how he felt about me, and how Adlai felt about me, without in any way trying to pressure me, or to say that if Adlai gets the nomination, this is what we'll do, because he knew that would not be the thing to say to me.

But he made it very clear to me that they were pleased with what I'd done politically in California, and how much they hoped that I would continue in this role. This certainly was an indication of support, if I wanted to go on as national committee-woman, which naturally was a very tempting thing.

Then Estes and I had a long private talk. Estes said, "You always are frank, and you tell me what I should hear rather than people who tell me what they think I want to hear. I've got word from California that I'm going to have a bigger victory than I did in '52. What do you think?"

I said, "Do you really want to know? Then don't enter the California primary. You can't possibly win in California. Look, the whole party machinery is lined up behind Stevenson as of now. You will have to take only the people who are left out."

He said, "Clara, if you sincerely feel that I can't win, I don't want you to sacrifice your career for me. Go on the Stevenson delegation."

I said, "Are you angry because I told you this?" He said, "No, I'm not angry. I appreciate your frankness in telling me something difficult, that you know I don't want to hear. I value what you're telling me. I know that you have a far better overall view of it, than anybody else who is calling me."

He said, "I realize that lots of these people want to ride on my coattail, hoping I can repeat what I did. Naturally, I'm



Shirpser: discouraged by what the situation is in California. And that's why I don't want you to sacrifice your career for me."

I said, "But you need me!" He said, "God knows I know I need you, Clara, but what you're doing in California is valuable. Don't give it up for me."

So, I said, "You know after you said that, I can't possibly not be loyal to you. If you are willing for me to leave you and not to support you to save my political career, how can I not continue with you to help you save your political career? Of course, I will go with you. What you've said makes it absolutely basic that I must stay with you now."

He kissed me and he hugged me, and he said, "You can still change your mind. Go and see Adlai, and then make up your mind."

I told him what Matt had said to me, I told him what Bill Blair had said to me.

Chall: But this was beforehand, before he had announced--

Shirpser: That was before he had announced. But he made it clear to me.

Chall: Why?

Shirpser: One of the reasons was because of the unfair treatment he had had. He really felt that this was a bad thing that California Democratic party officials had done. He was out of the country at the time. And he resented what had been done to Harriman, too. He thought it was wrong.

He said, "I don't discourage easily. I fight back. There are enough good people in California to form a creditable delegation. If you decide to go with me, you will bring prestige to the delegation and some of your friends would come who wouldn't if you were not one of my leaders in my California delegation."

People like Congressman Bernie Sisk and Assemblywoman Dorothy Donahoe did come on after I decided to do it.

Chall: I'm still trying to figure it out. California is still just one state in the nation. He had the whole nation to campaign, and the convention yet. Why did he choose...

Shirpser: Because California is the last state to have a primary election



Shirpser: and the largest state in the nation. Anyone who loses California can hardly go on to get the nomination. But, anyone who wins California has a tremendous boost in the convention.

Now, it didn't do Estes any good in the '52 convention to have won the California Democratic primary. But Estes realized the importance of the California campaign, and he hoped that the 1956 convention would be more fair and open.

In other words, if you wanted to be an authentic Democratic candidate for president you had to submit yourself to the California voters in the primary election.

Chall: What I'm really trying to find out is why was he planning to be a presidential candidate? I think it wasn't just in California that...The general tenor in the whole country was that Adlai Stevenson would be the nominee of the convention. And that Ike would run.

Why as it that he wanted to buck that whole tide?

Shirpser: You have to remember what happened in 1952. He bucked President Truman and beat him in New Hampshire, and then Mr. Truman pulled out. Estes was bucking the whole Democratic party in California in 1952. Pat Brown was heading the slate.

And he beat them something like two to one in California.

Chall: But there was no other candidate then.

Shirpser: That's true.

Chall: Now there was a candidate and he was well known all over the United States. He had done pretty well among the Democrats. He probably--obviously picked up more support in the last four years. This is Stevenson. And they weren't that much--too far apart on their commitment to the issues. What was behind his desire to run for president with everything, at this point, against him? More so, I think, than in 1952.

Shirpser: Well, you have to remember his background and his devotion to public service--just as Adlai had that same compulsion to serve his country. Estes had wanted to be president in 1952, and he felt that it was taken away from him unfairly in that boss-ridden convention.



Shirpsers: He thought that the 1956 convention would be a more open one. He hoped that most of the people who had been with him before would stay with him. Even though in California they demonstrated that they hadn't. Adlai had been defeated in the general election in 1952. A defeated candidate rarely wins the presidency a second time.

There were many logical reasons. Top people in the country, whose opinions he valued, were pledging themselves to him. He felt that he could make it this time. The powerful opposition of Sam Rayburn and President Truman were no longer against him.

He had this goal for which he had fought and bled and suffered, and he wanted to campaign again, and to win.

Chall: So, he felt that he needed you.

Shirpsers: He needed me. Loyalty is terribly important to me. Remember, I wouldn't have been national committeewoman if I hadn't been on Estes' slate of delegates in 1952.

He always, from the first minute that I met him, valued me, and praised me, and gave me the utmost in devotion. I think, in many ways, I was closer to him than almost anyone else in the whole United States.

And how can you turn your back on a close, admirable friend like that with whom you've come into politics, who needs you, to whom you are loyal? These are compelling reasons.

Chall: You still had to see Adlai Stevenson.

Shirpsers: I went on to see Adlai, and Bill was there, too. We started to talk. Adlai said, "Are you ready now to commit yourself, Clara? I'm hoping that you will be one of my most cherished and foremost delegates."

I burst into tears. I looked at him, and, sobbing, I said, "What words can I use to tell you: I admire you, I respect you, I love you, and I can't support you?" I sat there sobbing, and they were comforting me.

So, Adlai said, "I understand. Estes is going to run and you feel that in loyalty you must support him." I said, "Thank you for understanding."





Shirpser: But it tore me apart. I said: "I haven't slept for nights, Adlai. I'm really suffering. The only thing I can promise you is that, by being on that delegation I will be able to stop some of the destructive tactics. I will do my utmost to keep it on a fair basis, so that there won't be personal attacks. I am close to Estes, and he will listen to me. If Estes should win, I know how much he thinks of you. I know that anything that he might be able to do for you, he would want to do."

"I do have influence with Estes. Perhaps my being on that delegation may turn out in the long run to be helpful to you. I don't know how I can say that at this point, but truly it will never be that I am opposed to you, it will only be I am for Estes."

I went out of there trying not to cry any more, and I ran into Hubert Humphrey. He saw my red, swollen eyes, and said, "What have they been doing to you in there?" So, I started sobbing again. He put his arms around me. I was crying on his shoulder. I repeated what I said to Adlai and Bill and said, "I'm suffering. I don't know what to do."

He said, "Go away someplace by yourself. Take a tranquilizer. Think it through, and I hope you will come on the Stevenson delegation because he is going to win, and Estes is not. You know I think highly of Estes, but he hasn't got a chance. Do what's best for you; don't give up your political career."

Chall: My word! Do you think other people agonize so over these decisions as you did?

Shirpser: I don't know. You see, I was so close to both of them.

Chall: Some of the other men probably were, too. I don't know about the women. Did you ever talk to some of the other women?

Shirpser: I don't remember.

Chall: Martha Ragland and--

Shirpser: Martha was from Tennessee, and she thought Estes was going to win. I have a letter in which I told her frankly what the situation was in California, and that I thought that Adlai would win by a large majority.

She wrote back in such indignation! "How could you say such a thing! I'm surprised at you, Clara. I've always thought



Shirpser: your political judgment was good. I don't understand how you can think that Estes could even possibly lose."

Not that she was expedient, but she had her firm belief that he was going to win. So, it was easy to be for your own state's candidate, when you think he's going to win.

I thought Adlai was going to win, but I stayed with Estes. I'm not aware that anybody else did that, who was as close to both of them as I was. Almost everybody I knew on the Stevenson delegation tried to persuade me, too, and wanted me to come with them and assured me that that's where I'd have a happy campaign. Believe me, the Kefauver campaign was not a happy one in California, for me.

When I traveled with him campaigning in California--and nationwide--it was great. I had a very unhappy experience in California except when Estes was here.

I went back to Estes in Chicago at the National Committee meeting after I was calm again, and told him of my decision to support him. Of course, he was delighted. I had previously told Governor Harriman that I was still uncommitted, but that my ties to both Kefauver and Stevenson were strong, and since he wasn't entering the primary I had to make a decision for either one of them.

#### Organizing the Kefauver Campaign Committee: Clara's Appointment

Shirpser: Then we came back to California and started organizing a delegation for Kefauver. We had a meeting with Estes in December in Washington, D.C. Estes called us back there when he made his announcement. Tom Carrell went back and Lyle Cook, too.

Chall: My information here has Lyle Cook as chairman of Northern California.

Shirpser: Vice-chairman for Northern California.

Chall: Yes. And John Ennis as vice-chairman for Southern California. Tom Carrell for state chairman of California.

Shirpser: Now, the post I was given was--Estes announced it that day--I have a picture of it someplace with Jiggs Donohue, and with



*National Headquarters**673 continued*

# KEFAUVER CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

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J. HOWARD McGRATH  
VICE CHAIRMAN

A. BRADLEY EBEN  
VICE CHAIRMAN

CLARA SHIRPSER  
VICE CHAIRMAN

MABELLE KENNEDY  
VICE CHAIRMAN

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## KEFAUVER for PRESIDENT

COMMITTEE OF CALIFORNIA

SCARRELL, State Chairman  
CLARA SHIRPSER, Vice-Chairman  
COK, Northern Chairman  
FINIS, Southern Chairman

*1956 Primary* ✓



Page 22—THE INDEPENDENT  
Long Beach, Calif., Wed., Dec. 21, 1955

# Cal. Woman Named as Estes Aide

By ROBERT E. LEE  
(Of The Independent Washington Bureau)

WASHINGTON — Sen. Estes Kefauver Tuesday named Mrs. Clara Shirpsen of Berkeley to a top campaign post in his drive for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Mrs. Shirpsen, Democratic national committeewoman for California and the only member of the state organization's high command not backing the candidacy of Adlai Stevenson, will be in charge of women's activities for Kefauver in western states.

KEFAUVER announced the appointment of Mrs. Shirpsen and other top campaign advisers at a news conference during which he confirmed reports he will enter the Wisconsin primary April 3.

The Tennessee senator said he hasn't decided yet about Minnesota, Florida, Ohio, Oregon, Nebraska and other states. Earlier Kefauver committed himself to races in California and New Hampshire.

Stevenson, considered the front-running candidate, has said he'll enter in Minnesota, Florida, Pennsylvania and Illinois — in addition to California.

Kefauver formally announced appointment of F. Joseph Donohue, Washington lawyer and former Democratic national committeeman for the District of Columbia, as his campaign chairman.

HE SAID J. Howard McGrath, also a lawyer here and former U.S. attorney general and Democratic national committee chairman, will be chairman of a general advisory committee that will decide, among other things, what primaries Kefauver should enter.

Where he does enter, Kefauver made it plain, he will campaign personally for delegates to the 1956 nominating convention.

However, Donohue told reporters that Kefauver's primary campaigning will be "circumscribed" compared to his efforts in 1952, when he went into almost every available contest. Among those he won were California and Wisconsin.

"I want to elect the senator, not kill him," Donohue said.

Kefauver introduced Mrs. Shirpsen as "a woman who has done a tremendous job for the Democratic Party in California" and "a lady who has many contacts and great ability."

Mrs. Shirpsen said she had "rarely seen a candidate for the presidency give such recognition to women."

Usually, she said, "women just sit around and smile and let the boys figure things out."

MRS. SHIRPSEN told the press conference she is "very optimistic" about Kefauver's chances in California.

There were overflow crowds at every meeting during the senator's recent visit to the state, she said.

And she told Kefauver:

"You have a lot of appeal for women voters, your name is a household word, and I feel you have great strength at the voter level—and that's what counts in California."

## Statement by Mrs. Shirpsen

# California's Primary Called Demo Race Key

By Earl C. Behrens, Political Editor

The California primary "will be the key to the Democratic convention for President," Clara Shirpsen of Berkeley, Democratic national committeewoman, said yesterday.

Mrs. Shirpsen will go by plane to Washington Monday for a conference with Senator Estes Kefauver, who formally announced his candidacy for the presidency yesterday. At the same time the Tennessee Democrat said he would enter his name on the California presidential primary ballot.

Adlai Stevenson is also an announced entrant in the California primary.

Mrs. Shirpsen was the only one of the high ranking Democratic party officials in California who did not join the pro-Stevenson movement last October.

She said she was "glad that both great candidates"—Stevenson and Kefauver—"are willing to test their strength with the California voters because this is a basic principle of democracy, especially in California where we fortunately have one of the most fair and open primary laws."

Mrs. Shirpsen was a Kefauver delegate from California at the 1952 Democratic national convention.

After she has talked with Kefauver next week, she will announce her position in the Democratic primary fight.

It is a pretty safe guess that she will be in the Kefauver corner.

Lyle E. Cook, Berkeley attorney, was named Kefauver campaign chairman for Northern California and De Lancey Smith, San Francisco attorney, will be on the national finance and policy committees for the Tennessean.

Walter Marshall will be the campaign manager.









**KEFAUVER HUDDLES WITH CHAIRMEN**—Senator Estes Kefauver, Democrat of Tennessee, presidential nomination candidate, listens to his newly appointed general campaign chairman, F. Joseph (Jiggs) Donohue, Washington attorney, and Mrs. Clara Shirlpser, Democratic National committeewoman from California, who was named vice chairman in charge of women's activities for Western States.—AP Photo.

## Kefauver Puts Donohue At Helm of Campaign

It is now official that former District Commissioner F. Joseph Donohue will be campaign manager for Senator Kefauver, Democrat of Tennessee, in his new bid for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Senator Kefauver made the announcement at a press conference yesterday. Mr. Donohue was a Truman appointee and his decision to help Senator Kefauver was supposedly made with the agreement of former President Truman, who was at one time a political rival of Senator Kefauver.

When he announced his new presidential bid last Friday, Mr. Kefauver said he expected that no "stop Kefauver" movement

would be captained by Mr. Truman in Chicago.

Senator Kefauver also said that he will go into the Wisconsin primary on April 3 in a bid for the State's 28 nominating votes. He did not challenge another Democratic aspirant, Adlai Stevenson, to meet him there, as he did when announcing his decision to enter the New Hampshire primary.

He has already made known his intention to enter primaries March 13 in New Hampshire and June 5 in California.

The Tennessee Senator said he had made no decision about entering primaries in Florida, Minnesota, Oregon, Ohio and Nebraska.



Shirpser: Howard McGrath (campaign manager and campaign chairman, nationally).

Howard McGrath was former attorney general of the United States, and I believe he was governor and senator from Rhode Island. He was Estes' campaign chairman, and he was a very responsible and distinguished man to have in that post. Jiggs Donohue was the national campaign manager. He had held high political office, too. Estes named me as co-chairman with them. I imagine this was one of the highest political posts a woman ever had in a campaign.

His letter asked me to be co-chairman for his national campaign with special responsibility for the Western states for the Women's Division.

I traveled nationally with Estes all over the United States. Sometimes Howard McGrath would be aboard, and sometimes Jiggs Donohue would be aboard, and I sat in on all these high-level policy decisions. Fortunately, they all felt that I had earned this privilege.

I think that I had, too. But, not always do you get what you've earned! I thought it was a very distinguished honor to have been given to me.

Then, I also was vice-chairman for Estes' California campaign, statewide. I was right below Tom Carrell in the listing of officers. Estes, at one time, asked me if I wanted to be state chairman of his campaign. I was thinking about that and I talked to Jack Tolan, and he jumped up in agitation: "For God's sake, Clara, don't even think about it! You'd be crucified! With the bunch you've got on that delegation? Don't dream of it! You'll have a nervous breakdown. Don't do it..."

I don't think that anybody else ever knew that Estes asked me, but he did. But I agreed with Jack Tolan. It's a killing job; day and night. You have to give full time to it. I don't think I could have had the physical or emotional stamina to take it.

Chall: What about Walter Marshall who was the campaign manager in California? I have his name here, I must have picked it out of something.

Shirpser: Yes. He was part of the public relations staff and coordinator. Leonard Shane was our public relations man.



## Selecting Delegates

Shirpser: When we came back to California with the campaign officers chosen, we had meetings to plan and to organize.

In 1956, for the first time in the history of California politics, and maybe nationwide, too, we had district caucuses to choose the delegates. This was my recommendation, and I fought hard for this. Do you remember the big flare-up in 1972 when the McGovern delegation said they were making history by having district caucuses? We did that in 1956 in the Kefauver delegation, all over the state of California.

Then we had a committee of about ten, who chose the delegates-at-large. Where somebody important was left out in the district caucuses, we changed a few recommendations or made that person a delegate at large. We thought that progressive strength was in the grass roots, and we wanted this to be a grass-roots delegation.

It's true that you don't get the most distinguished people that way, but you do get workers. You do get people who identify with the candidate and who will work hard for him. Naturally, you seek to get the best people in the district.

Chall: With whom did you work to make these last delegate selections?

Shirpser: They were all people of whom we've spoken. Harley Hise, DeLancey Smith, treasurer for Northern California. (He was not one of the people I found easy to work with.)

The people who were officers in the campaign, Tom Carrell, Lyle Cook. I imagine that there were ten to twelve people. But it was democratically chosen. The McGovern people had no idea that the Kefauver district caucuses took place in 1956. I have records to prove it.

So, I was glad that we pioneered that way, too. As I look back over this, I feel great satisfaction. Of course, in 1956, I was no longer an amateur, but I could see things that needed changing. I wasn't pressured by the fact that it had never been done before, and that you couldn't make a change for the better. Although I waited almost twenty years to see it done again, by the McGovern campaign, it is probably the format for choosing delegates from hereon, I would think.





Shirpser: But our statewide committee did pick the delegates-at-large, who were often big contributors or distinguished people. We did our best to choose qualified people up and down the state. It isn't easy to make those choices.

### The Campaign Gets Underway

Shirpser: Then the campaign, itself, actually started. Tom Carrell was an awfully nice person to work with. We were very good friends.\* He was a business man, and he had to give time to his own business. He didn't have full time to give to the campaign, and he often delegated authority to people who, I think, were not qualified to take that much responsibility.

As for my own relations with Lyle Cook, you can imagine they were strained after the way he--remember? He nominated my opponent and spoke out against me?\*\* So, I had as little to do with him as necessary.

By then, I did speak to him, and we did confer when necessary, and tried to work together. But I found a letter, which I wrote to Tom Carrell, which was a sample of the way this campaign was run. You have to get a certain number of signatures to qualify your candidate for the primary election. You need about five thousand more signatures than you officially must have because some people will have moved away, or will give fictitious addresses, or are just not voters.

In this letter about four or five days before the final filing day, I mentioned that I found out that we did not have the required number of voters' signatures. We first tried to do this project with volunteers, but found we couldn't get enough so they had hired a qualified signature taker. I've forgotten his name.

It was he who called me five days before the final filing day, and said, "You're not going to be able to qualify Estes Kefauver for the ballot." I said, "What are you talking about?"

He told me that we lacked many thousands of signatures. I called Lyle Cook, and he told me that this was none of my affair. He was handling it. I called the man who was supposed to be in charge for him in San Francisco, whose name I've forgotten, who told me that he was only working with Lyle and

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\*Tom Carrell died October 15, 1972.

\*\*pp. 98-104





Shirpser: that I shouldn't bother about it.

I called Tom Carrell, and I couldn't reach him. I sent him wires. I got on the phone; I called up and down the state. I think I had a long distance bill of hundreds of dollars. I told Kefauver workers in all parts of the state about the plight that we were in, and urged them to work around-the-clock getting signatures.

Some people had already turned in their lists, and they got new lists and they went out and got more signatures. Others had thought that we had more than enough signatures, and had quit. Somehow we just made it. Probably an hour before the filing those lists with sufficient signatures were turned in.

I may be taking more credit than I should, but I am convinced that without this large and determined last minute effort, we might have failed, and my letter to Tom Carrell certainly states this. I asked him why, when I was vice-chairman of California for Estes, and co-chairman nationally, I wasn't informed of this situation. Why wasn't I asked to help them to prevent a catastrophe?

Imagine what would have happened, what a debacle it would have been if Estes hadn't qualified for the primary election in California. How could you ever explain or rationalize such a thing? Everybody was "passing the buck." But that's the kind of campaign it was.

Chall: It was terrible?

Shirpser: It was an incredibly poor campaign.

Chall: What was the matter? Couldn't these people pull a campaign together? Lyle Cook and Tom Carrell were certainly experienced. I don't know about the others like John Ennis.

Shirpser: They were experienced. John Ennis was a well-known attorney in Southern California. Michael Fanning was an officer, who had formerly been Los Angeles postmaster.

Chall: But these people at the head, the ones who are supposed to be running the campaign. What happened to them?

Shirpser: I don't know if they had ever run a campaign before, and we were terribly short of money. It was hurting.



Shirpser: Just as a sample of how "broke" we were, Estes didn't have a single statewide television program that we could pay for. He was on television often, because he was newsworthy and he was doing things that were newsworthy. Of course, he had press traveling with him wherever he went.

So, there was some television coverage, but not nearly what it should have been, even in the press. I think it was Leonard Shane, the publicity chairman, who called me and said, "Clara, we've got to have one statewide television program the night before the election. We are turning to you to raise the money for it."

I said, "How much will it be?" He said, "\$2500." I said, "Well, I'll do my best to raise it, but it's such short notice. What kind of a program do you want it to be?"

He said, "I would like to discuss that with you, but since you are going to be doing it, we want you to be the chairman for it, the moderator, why don't you conceive it as a woman's program and have women ask him questions on the important issues in his campaign?"

"Then, when we come to Estes' role through the years in backing women for political office, and in appointing women, and giving them important roles all through his campaign, this would be a natural. It might help to get a lot of women's votes."

I agreed to do it. Again, I stayed on the phone around the clock, and I contributed, too, of course. Though many had already contributed as much as they were going to, I managed to get sufficient funds. It was hard work.

Chall: Is this the one that Drew Pearson narrated?

Shirpser: Yes.

Chall: How did you get Drew Pearson?

Shirpser: He's a close friend of Estes. He always gave him an awfully good break in all his national columns.

I heard later that Lyle Cook phoned Estes and said, "Clara's taking money away from this campaign to have a television program where she could be moderator."



Shirpser: Of course Estes said that he had asked me to do so, and appreciated my effort in raising the funds. This is the kind of obstacle and roadblock they kept putting in my path. I did the TV program because the statewide public relations chairman for the campaign asked me to do it. It was a terribly difficult thing for me to do with so little time remaining in the campaign. We flew to Los Angeles at our own expense.

I brought Frances Shaskan from here (the chairman for San Francisco, and a very capable, and articulate woman). We had someone who represented minority groups. It was a very carefully thought out program with statewide, and geographical interests, and it represented a wide cross section.

It got excellent repercussions. Estes was the "star," of course. We asked him pertinent questions, and he was at his best, with his experience and wide knowledge of issues. Afterwards, he told me that he thought it was a wonderful program. He thought it had done a tremendous amount of good.

Chall: Were you having difficulty with these men all the way through the campaign? Was it just a problem of nervous tension because there wasn't enough money and not really the best kind of support for Estes Kefauver in the state, which made everybody tense? Or was it that, plus the fact that you were a woman taking part here, maybe showing them up?

Shirpser: I don't really know. I don't think it's a question of showing them up. I think some of them felt that I had responsibilities they would have liked to have, perhaps. There were so few women in politics in responsible roles in those days. At the 1960 convention I read someplace that only 13 percent were women.

So, a woman in a position of responsibility in a campaign does have to battle somewhat to carry out her responsibilities. I know if anybody ever wanted to help me I welcomed them with open arms. I was so glad to delegate responsibility where I could.

But there was the idea that "men know best." I was always aware of that feeling. I had to battle often for what I thought was important. Never did that happen when Estes was here; then my path was made very smooth.

I remember one labor official, a woman who liked Estes a lot, said, "What do you have to do to get your job? To travel



Shirpser: with Estes and to have him so devoted to you, and always praising you? What do you have to do?"

I answered: "Oh, just give up your life to him."





XI THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY CAMPAIGN, 1956  
(Interview 13, March 14, 1973)

The Protagonists Square Off

Shirpser: Perhaps we ought to take up Pat Brown's letter now, and my letter to Adlai. This was in January of 1956. You see, I continued to carry out my assignments as national committee-woman. I kept bringing national speakers to various districts in California. I have a series of letters from Matt McClosky in which he asks me to get contributions for the Woodrow Wilson dinner in Washington, which was to supply funds for the congressional campaigns, and for the United States Senate campaign.

We had a very important race between Richard Richards and Sam Yorty for the U.S. Senate Democratic primary election. Matt sent me a list of contributors to the Sam Rayburn campaign dinner, which had been held in Washington. I think there were close to fifty from California. I wrote to all those people and followed up with phone calls.

I didn't go to the State Central Committee office in San Francisco any oftener than I could help. Because it wasn't a very congenial atmosphere for me there, as you can understand with all the pro-Stevenson sentiment, when I was supporting Kefauver. But I did as much work as I could from home, and used the phone more often. I think I paid a part-time secretary to write letters for me at home, where I have a typewriter, too.

I managed to carry out my duties. I sent Adlai a letter which requested him to make an address when he was coming to California in the near future, and I wrote of how anxious we were to have him, always.



Shirpser: I kept up my good relationship with Adlai, and tried to keep my National Committee post separate from my post as Kefauver chairman. It was difficult, always.

Then I refer to a letter, which I wrote to Pat Brown, and I explained that on the front pages of most of the newspapers in California Pat Brown had made a statement that "if you win the California primary, it is so important, that you will receive the 1956 convention nomination." I am in complete agreement with this. But the next paragraph in Pat's press statement was, "Even if Senator Kefauver should win the California primary he will not capture the Democratic convention nomination."

The second quote was in the San Francisco News with the headline, "Adlai supporters rap Kefauver." One of Pat Brown's statements was, "The Kefauver people are largely those who cannot get along with the Democratic party organization in California. And having no place else to exercise their political leadership, they find a refuge in Senator Kefauver's campaign."

Chall: That's a statement that I think we should consider. It was rather shocking. I think it might just be politics. But what did he really mean?

Shirpser: Well, I think that is a very unfair type of politics. We did have some distinguished people on our Kefauver slate. Tom Carrelli had been a well known Democratic party official in California, very active and generous with financial support. We had Congressman Sisk from Fresno. We had Mike Fanning, who had been former postmaster for Los Angeles, and Harley Hise, former chairman of RFC in Washington. There were well-known people. Many women who had held political office, such as Frances Shaskan, who had been district chairman of the CDC.

Our delegation was one of which you didn't have to be ashamed. Pat's statement was unjust--that all of us had no other place to exercise political leadership. In my case, I was Democratic National Committeewoman and I was still exercising the prerogatives, and the responsibilities of my office and certainly did not fit into his category of having "no other place to go." Adlai wanted me to be on his delegation.

Chall: There were, apparently, other people that might have fit in with this. And they may have been the people that Suren Saroyan was concerned about and about whom you wrote in letters to Estes Kefauver many months prior to that.



Shirpser: Yes. There was no doubt that the Democratic party organization officials and those presidents of the CDC had gone to Adlai Stevenson in that bandwagon that started rolling so early.

We had quite a few labor leaders, too, on the Kefauver delegation. Some of the top labor leaders who didn't like the other delegation's tactics, and who also remembered Senator Kefauver's outstanding record in support of labor. We had some of the top minority people in the state, who knew that Senator Kefauver was for civil rights. Although he came from Tennessee, he was exceptionally strong on civil rights.

But I wrote in this next paragraph to Adlai Stevenson, "I've been doing my utmost to have a constructive policy for the Kefauver campaign. And it is most difficult to keep out of the press the answers that Senator Kefauver supporters want to make to Pat's statement, with bitter rebuttals. I shall continue my efforts along this line, but I do not know how long they will continue to be effective, unless there is some policy adapted by officials of your campaign, too. My hope is that the Democratic party in California will be able to unite wholeheartedly in support of the nominee of our party."

So, I felt that Adlai had to know what was going on here. I wrote to Pat Brown. I congratulated him on his highly important office as state campaign chairman for Adlai Stevenson, and said that his position of leadership would have tremendous value in the Stevenson campaign.

Then I went on to say, "I hope that this contest can be waged in a more constructive manner. Already there have been several rather destructive statements... (I think that's an understatement) ...applying to the Kefauver delegation which have provoked much resentment. I have had difficulty in keeping angry rebuttals on the part of some Kefauver people out of the press."

Then, I continued, "We have two great Democratic leaders contesting in California. I intend to direct my efforts towards support of the candidate for whom I'm working. As you know, I have the deepest respect and admiration and affection for Adlai Stevenson. I never will say a derogatory word where he is concerned. May the best man win! Sincerely, Clara..."

Pat answered me immediately, thanking me for my contratulations, and congratulating me, too, on "assuming leadership of a campaign of a fine man, Estes Kefauver. The personal attack



Shirpser: made upon me by Tom Carrell, however, is the most destructive thing that has happened to the Democratic party in the past eight years.

"You and Roger and Wally, as well as many others, have worked with great difficulty to build a Democratic party in this state. We are succeeding, and will continue to succeed unless more speeches like Tom Carrell's are made, and then all we have done will go out of the window. There was never any effort to freeze out Mr. Estes Kefauver, and it couldn't have been done if we so desired. I did try to mobilize people who are in favor of Stevenson because throughout the United States there was an effort by the Republican press to diminish him. They know that he is the strongest candidate that the Democrats can put out. It is shocking for Democrats to lend themselves to speeches such as the one Tom Carrell made."

Well, my own position is clear. I am positive I did not ever say one derogatory word, against Adlai Stevenson. I couldn't have and I wouldn't have.

Chall: What did Tom Carrell say?

Shirpser: Well, he spoke of political bosses in Adlai's campaign. That issue was raised over and over, often because of Paul Ziffren's reputation. There was evidence there. The way they started that "Boom for Stevenson" using the State Central Committee headquarters, early in October, timed when Estes Kefauver was in Japan on a world wide tour to inform himself of world conditions, and the day that Carmen De Sapio (Democratic National Committeeman for New York) arrived, who was supporting Governor Harriman for president.

You saw my press releases, which did not speak of political bosses. But as the campaign got more heated this was said more and more often.

Then Lyle Cook sent out a press release later in the campaign attacking Adlai Stevenson with such derogatory statements that I resented it, and I also thought that this hurt the Kefauver campaign in California. I told Lyle what I thought of it, which didn't make our relationship any happier, but it never was, anyway, after that Fresno convention when he nominated my opponent. This was the sort of political campaigning which I deplored and tried to stop.





Shirpsr: Later, San Jose had a district meeting with County Central Committee officers and congressional district chairmen and members of the district council of Clubs. There was an interesting agenda, in which I was glad to participate.

They asked Pat Brown to come and speak for his candidate, who was Adlai Stevenson. They asked me to come speak for my candidate, who was Estes Kefauver. There was a lot of good will at that meeting.

I was asked to introduce Pat Brown and I was glad to do so. I think that Pat then introduced me, too. I know we said good things to each other about what our roles were. That theme, "may the best man win," was followed by both of us.

We came out of the meeting and shook hands. A picture was taken of us shaking hands. We both thought that we had accomplished something constructive there. Instead of attacking, you speak for the man who you're supporting. I wish we had had more meetings like that. I've longed for them.

#### The Press

Shirpsr: I found some press clippings that are rather amusing, so we can go to a lighter note occasionally. I wrote in a letter to Estes: "I need protection from my friends."

Chall: Which friends were you meaning?

Shirpsr: Well, people who wrote letters to the editor, for instance, I have a clipping regarding a man I didn't know, but this is what he wrote, "Clara Shirpsr is a doll. She is wholesome, well dressed, bright, and pretty, too. I'm for her." You can imagine the kidding I took after that one.

Then we have one here that says, "Democratic woman beats drum for Kefauver." This was in the Long Beach Press Telegram. It states that I was the only party organization leader of important statewide rank, supporting Kefauver. And that I typified the "earnest, eager-beaver amateur in politics, whose support Senator Kefauver seems to attract just as consistently as he appears to generate opposition from the old hands of the Democratic party organization."



Shirpser: Well, this tells something about me, including what India Edwards once said, "I'll bet you're the first woman in history to make the National Committee after only two years in party work."

You know, when you're in the right place at the right time it always helps! I've found that especially true in politics.  
[Laughter]

Chall: It's very hard to judge where that might be.

Shirpser: Yes. The matter of luck enters into it a great deal.

'Then, there's another one called, "Meet Clara Shirpser."  
And at the top of it I wrote in capital letters, "Whew!"  
[Laughs]

This was the Los Angeles Free Press and it was by James L. Cole. He wrote, "Although Estes Kefauver may have left his St. George white horse tied up somewhere in the hills of Tennessee, he found when he arrived in California foremost among the hearty souls a reasonable fascimile of Joan of Arc and a dressed-up Lady Godiva. Her name is Clara Shirpser."  
(You just wonder where they dream up such statements!)

Chall: Those were in the days before the woman's liberation movement.

Shirpser: I guess so. Certainly they embarrassed me. It just meant that I kept getting teased and kidded.

Chall: Well, it denigrates the role of the woman in politics. In the language of today, you were being looked on mostly as a sex symbol. That means that you really aren't doing anything important for the party, or for your candidate, or anything else.

Shirpser: Right. And this was particularly untrue of me because I always spoke on issues. I was writing articles. I had the audacity to tackle a press release on "The first hundred days of the Eisenhower Administration" when I was asked to do that, in a four-column article. I was always speaking on issues.

I was not the fluffy, superficial type of woman who just sits at head tables and introduces people. I was really working for the issues. This was important to me.

The article goes on to say that I was idealistic, and a product of the League of Women Voters, and I had poured my



Shirpsers: "enthusiastic heart and tireless energy into the fight for Senator Kefauver." Well, that part of it, I think, is true.

In another newspaper article; "Clara was sitting beside her hero, Kefauver, during a press conference. And when he talked about his big vote in Minnesota, which he had just won, Clara beamed. When he pointed out he had been elected senator in the southern state of Tennessee campaigning for the same issues he now stands for, and expected to carry the South just the same this time, Clara sparkled."

It goes on in that vein, which is certainly stupid. This is "the way it was" in some of the newspapers. But most of the time reporters gave me a much more valuable type of interview. There were a couple of articles which were humorous, but much more valid.

This one is called the "Case of the Sawbuck" or "How the Stevenson Campaign got Kefauver's Ten Dollars." This was written by Lyn Fox in the Call Bulletin.

"The trouble started when Mrs. Shirpsers, National Committee-woman of California and co-chairman of the Kefauver campaign, started thanking people. Before this finished, three sets of blood pressure had hit the ceiling and Mrs. Shirpsers's personal check turned up in Adlai Stevenson's campaign fund.

"Actors in the skit are Mrs. Shirpsers and two physicians who we shall only identify as doc number 1, and doc number 2. (These being doctors.) As the curtain goes up, Mrs. Shirpsers is seen opening a letter from doc number 1. Checks tumble from the envelope, for doc number 1 is a vigorous supporter of Estes Kefauver in his bid for the California Democratic presidential nomination. After Mrs. Shirpsers had spoken at his home to a group of doctors and friends, this doc number 1 had been busy raising much needed money for the senator.

"Mrs. Shirpsers smoothed out the checks, murmuring happily the while. One check attracts her attention. It is a ten-buck item made out to doc number 1, signed by doc number 2, and endorsed over to the Kefauver fund by the payee. Taking pen in hand, Mrs. Shirpsers promptly writes doc number 2 a nice thank-you note saying how much this contribution to Senator Kefauver's fund is appreciated.



Shirpser: "Scene number two. Doc number 2 is seated, opening his letters, and he finds the note from Mrs. Shirpser. As he reads it his face flushes and the veins in his neck swell. He explodes. He grabs pen and paper, and hastily scrawls, 'Doc number 1 was in error. He was to donate that amount to Adlai Stevenson, not Kefauver. I'm for Adlai 100 percent.'

"Mrs. Shirpser receives doc number 2's blunt letter, feels terrible, promptly sends him her own personal check for ten bucks, with regrets for the error.

"Scene number four. Doc number 2 receives Mrs. Shirpser's check, immediately endorses it over to the Stevenson campaign. Then takes pen in hand to thank her for her contribution to Stevenson.

"Scene number five. Mrs. Shirpser at telephone, frantically talking to doc number 1. She tells him about the mix-up and wires begin to sizzle. 'Blast that so-and-so,' says doc number 1, 'I won it from him fair and square. He bet me that Stevenson would carry Minnesota. I want that ten bucks to go to Kefauver.'

"'My oh my!' says Mrs. Shirpser, takes pen in hand to explain the whole business to doc number 2 and asks him to return her check. His reply is prompt, 'Sorry,' he writes, 'but your check has gone to the Stevenson fund. But here's mine for ten bucks if you promise you won't endorse it over to Kefauver.'

"Last scene. Mrs. Shirpser heaving a sigh of relief and commenting, 'Well, I got twenty dollars for Democratic causes because of that ten dollars anyway.' Curtain." [Laughter] Isn't it funny?

Chall: How does a reporter get a story of that kind? I've often wondered...

Shirpser: Frequently, the different political editors phoned me. Probably this had just happened. Maybe one of the doctors told Mr. Fox. I think doctor number 1 "leaked" that story. Because doctor number 2 did a very unfair thing. He told me that check was to go to Stevenson, but doc number 1, who won it, wanted it to go to Kefauver. In the middle of the mix-up I wrote my own check and it arrived in the Stevenson campaign, which created quite a sensation, as you can imagine.





Shirpser: Then, I have a letter that I wrote to Estes when we came back from one of our strenuous man-killing and woman-killing tours, in which I wrote, "As I look back over our strenuous tour, I find it difficult to tell you how much I appreciate how much you did. You are really the world's best campaigner! I can't stop marvelling at your unfailing good temper, and your cooperation under the most trying circumstances. It seems to me that you must be very glad to be free of my constant prodding: 'Estes, please come now, Estes it's awfully late. Estes, we have to go. Estes, please!', accompanied by shoves and yanks or whatever seemed indicated at the time. Please believe that I didn't want to nag you, but if I hadn't filled this uncongenial watchdog role, we probably would never have left the first congressional district in which we went to campaign."

I thought this was typical of the way I learned to act, because Estes always shook hands with everybody and that, of course, delayed us. It got later, and later, and I literally had to pull him out of meetings much of the time. It's strange how candidates will forget the schedule, and then somebody has got to keep them as nearly on time as possible.

I also mentioned to Estes that many phone calls had come since this trip, and I was delighted with people's reaction. For instance, from Julius Friedman, who was Harold Taggart's campaign manager. (Harold was running for Congress in the San Mateo district.) "Julius is a practical and rather hardboiled sort of politician," but he called to tell me that he now understood why I'm so devoted to you, and he thinks you are a great guy. He said all the right things about your strength, courage, Lincolnesque qualities, and so forth."

I kept trying to tell him good things whenever I could, because there were so many bad things I had to tell him.

#### Analyzing the the Appeal of Kefauver and Stevenson

Chall: Can you tell me what the bad things were?

Shirpser: Mostly, money troubles; lack of funds; lack of efficient organization; lack of enough distinguished people supporting him; dissension among his supporters--especially between the northern and southern Kefauver groups in California; the growing strength of the Stevenson campaign in California (which I knew best in



Shirpser: our delegation) and in other places where I was in correspondence with National Committee members and friends and where I had campaigned with Estes.

I hated to discourage him because a candidate has to continue to be optimistic. You know, you spoke of why he thought he could win. When you see some of the endorsements he got from labor organizations, from minority groups, from women's groups, from senior citizen's groups, they are impressive. Why would a man like Howard McGrath, who had been governor and a United States Senator and attorney general for the United States, become his national campaign chairman? And a man like Jiggs Donohue--who was a distinguished attorney in Washington, D.C., and had many political offices--why would he become national campaign manager unless he believed in Estes and thought he could win? Estes had other very distinguished people supporting him.

All over the country people felt that Estes had rapport with the people who showed their trust in him and thought that he would come through again with victory.

Chall: But on the other side he also had people like Eleanor Roosevelt and some intellectuals who felt that he didn't have a broad enough understanding of complex national and international issues.

Shirpser: I don't believe this is valid.

Chall: I picked this out from Gorman, and I wondered about that.

Shirpser: No, I don't believe this is valid. I don't know if we spoke of it before, but Estes was one of the top people in Atlantic Union, and Federal Union, which led to NATO.

They gave him award after award from those foreign relations groups. He was always at the Interparliamentary Union at the invitation of the International Board to represent the United States, every time they had an international conference. He had tremendous interest in foreign policy.

I believe that his grasp of domestic issues was great, because he had national experience as a U.S. Senator for several terms, and a congressman before that, and he had been extremely active in legislation, reforming abuses in many domestic fields.



Chall: Why do you suppose, that if Gorman is correct in what he says other people felt, that other people felt this way?

Shirpser: I think they did not really evaluate his career, or check on his voting record. Obviously, Adlai Stevenson attracted the intellectuals. Estes had a more down-to-earth type of speaking. He was never an orator, and did not have the eloquence that Adlai Stevenson demonstrated.

But I think his television appearances, where he was interviewed, showed a broad grasp of problems, and a wide fund of information, and he was beautifully poised. I often urged him to speak extemporaneously, because that was when he was at his best, in my opinion.

But there's no doubt that the intellectuals and the people with a scholastic background saw in Adlai Stevenson the man they wanted in the presidency. I, too, agree.

Chall: At the same time the so-called party bosses from one end of the country to the other backed Stevenson. That was a rather interesting combination. They didn't trust Kefauver to play along with them, I suppose.

Shirpser: That's correct. He was too independent to suit them. Even in his own state, the voters were for him, but not the party officials. He had a firm conviction that he was elected to do what he thought was right. He refused to take orders, which was one of the things that made Lyndon Johnson vindictive to Estes.

Estes tried to cooperate where he could, but where he couldn't agree, he had to do what he thought was the right thing. I don't know whether I told you that Estes wanted to go on the Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S. Senate. He had applied for that, and his seniority entitled him to be a member, as well as his interest in foreign policy. When John Kennedy was a freshman senator, Lyndon Johnson, as Majority Leader, put him on the Foreign Relations Committee, and bypassed Estes.

This was an example of how a man who wants power and to dominate, will try to punish a man he can't control.

During the primary campaign, we had one tour that went through the southern part of the state; another one in the Central Valley; another one in the Bay Area, and the northern part of the state. I traveled with Estes on all of these campaign tours. We always got good crowds. Even though we had



Shirpser: too few advance men to send ahead to organize meetings, even though we couldn't pay for many ads, the people did come to hear him. He always attracted good crowds, and that was encouraging.

Chall: Were these whistle-stop tours, or were you driving, or flying?

Shirpser: We usually drove or flew on commercial airlines. We didn't have the money to pay for a whistle-stop train trip throughout the state.

Chall: Who went with you on these California trips?

Shirpser: When it was in the south obviously John Ennis (Southern California campaign chairman) went as well as Tom Carrell (state campaign chairman). I don't believe Lyle Cook went because he was Northern California chairman. But I was a statewide official of Estes' campaign, so I always went. And Estes wanted me to come, always.

Then, you'd have all the local officials with you wherever you were traveling from the place you left to the place where they wanted to arrive shaking hands with Estes and being photographed. That includes the candidates. Dick Richards was with us a lot of the time campaigning with us statewide, and sometimes, Sam Yorty, too.

The presidents of the clubs who were for Estes often joined us. Labor officials came; Joe de Silva, who is the head of the Retail Clerks, supported Estes, and sometimes traveled with him.

Later when Estes was contesting for the vice-presidential nomination in the convention, Jimmy Roosevelt called me and said that he would like to second Estes' nomination. So, I went to Estes to get his approval. People often called me because they knew I could get to Estes. I knew all the people around him so well, and my loyalty had earned me access to him. They knew Estes would want to talk to me.

So, Estes said he was delighted. That was good strategy, after Jimmy had been for Stevenson for president in the 1956 primary, for him to second the nomination of Estes for vice-president at the convention.

Obviously, when we were in the Central Valley, Congressman Sisk came with us; Dorothy Donahoe came with us when we were in Bakersfield area. We got as many distinguished and prominent





Shirpser: people we could find wherever we were. We set up these meetings ahead of time. But our campaign was often hit-and-miss.

It was difficult. It was not an easy period for me, ever.

Chall: Was it harder than it had been four years before?

Shirpser: Yes, very much.

Chall: Stevenson wasn't on the scene at that time.

Shirpser: That's right. We were campaigning against a favorite son delegation, headed by Pat Brown.

Chall: It's not the same.

Shirpser: No. The Stevenson campaign was extremely well organized. They had the funds to have the advance men, and the publicity men, going ahead to set up everything. They had paid TV. Estes always had to rely on being newsworthy in order to be interviewed on TV, and usually he was. We did have press conferences, and television interviews, and radio speeches. But not nearly as much as the Stevenson people did.

Not that Adlai wasn't extremely newsworthy, but when he had something special to say they could pay for a program.

#### Reaction to Kefauver's Victory in Minnesota

Shirpser: The Minnesota primary was probably the highlight of the primary campaigns, as far as Estes was concerned. You know, he won Minnesota in '52 and he still had firm support there. His stand on farm issues were popular there. He was for increased parity for farmers. His stand on water and power were important in Minnesota, and his fine labor record was very important there. With minimum funds and organization, he won a decisive victory in Minnesota, which gave a tremendous boost to his campaign. It also created a very difficult situation.

Adlai Stevenson charged that Republican funds went into the Minnesota primary to help Kefauver. He named Tex McCrary, who was a public relations man in New York, as the person who had channelled those funds to Estes' campaign. Estes made a strong



Shirpser: rebuttal saying that his stands on issues were not the ones which would endear him to Republicans, and that he did not receive Republican campaign contributions in Minnesota.

But what Adlai Stevenson had said (I have the clipping here) is that in order to defeat him they sent Republican funds into Minnesota. I called Tex McCrary, because, after all, he was the man who was named by Adlai. I have a wire from Mr. McCrary, in reply, which says, "As far as I know, contrary to the wholly unsupported charge of Mr. Stevenson, there was no single substantial or even token New York Republican, repeat Republican, contribution to your successful primary contest in Minnesota." (The wire is addressed to Senator Estes Kefauver, at the Senator Hotel in Sacramento where we were campaigning.)

The telegram continued: "My reference to Republican support for you concerned only the support of Republican voters in Minnesota, which is a matter of record, and did not have anything to do with Republican contributors from New York. Only a very foolish Republican would risk contributing to a primary campaign of the candidate who might be the most difficult Democrat to defeat in November. Sincerely, Tex McCrary."

So, there was no validity to that charge in which Adlai named Tex McCrary. But this led to national columns, saying that Republican money from New York had been poured into Minnesota, and even to charges that they had been poured into California. So much so, that I had to send out a press release to that effect, that I, as co-chairman nationally, and vice-chairman in California, would surely know if there had been Republican contributions. And as far as I knew, I had never seen even one.

Estes felt great resentment at that charge. He told me privately that he had absolutely no knowledge of any Republican contributions in Minnesota. He thought that before Adlai named Tex McCrary, he should have certainly contacted him for confirmation, before using his name in a press article.

This made a very unhappy situation in the California primary. This followed the Fresno CDC Convention in February, where Estes received so much support. From there on the relationship between the two men deteriorated.

Chall: Well, the campaign became a little hard.



Shirpser: Yes, it was getting heated.

Chall: After the Minnesota primary, as long as we're on it, wasn't there a statement from Paul Butler which you answered?

Shirpser: I would like to refer to that. I'm glad you brought it up.

At Estes' request, Charlie Allredge, who was his national press chairman, whom I knew well, prepared this news release for me. I wasn't anxious to do this, because it isn't easy to publicly criticize your national chairman when you're a member of the committee. It makes for resentment and animosity. I didn't initiate this press release, but sent it at Estes' request.

Chall: What did you have to take him on for?

Shirpser: First, I reminded Mr. Butler, in my letter, that when he was asking for my support for National Committee chairman (and those of many others who had been for Kefauver), he had promised me and the other National Committee members that he would remain neutral in the 1956 campaign.

That was the one thing Estes requested me to ask of him, and Paul Butler had pledged this strongly. My press release, which came from Los Angeles where we were campaigning, was prepared by the Kefauver headquarters down there. Naturally, it contained what I wanted them to say.

Chall: This had been prepared by Charles Allredge?

Shirpser: By Allredge and actually mimeographed in the Kefauver state headquarters. Later when I had a bad situation with De Lancey Smith, I had proof that my press release was made at Estes' request. My press release stated: "that by attempting to belittle Senator Estes Kefauver's overwhelming victory in Minnesota last week, and thereby attempting to influence voters in future primaries in Adlai Stevenson's favor, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Mr. Paul Butler, had broken a pledge which he made to me personally at the time of his election as chairman.

"When Mr. Butler was seeking election in the strongly contested election for National Committee chairman, he telephoned me from Indiana and asked for my support."



Chall: You've mentioned this several times as we've talked, so why don't you go into the part of the letter that has just to do with the Estes Kefauver Minnesota primary?

Shirpser: Yes. Continuing the press releases: "In November, 1955, he stated to the National Committee members that he believed his responsibility as chairman was to elect the nominee of the party, and not to select him.

"Yet, in a report by the United Press, from French Lick, Indiana (where Mr. Butler lives), on March 24, 1956, Mr. Butler was quoted as saying that 'Stevenson's defeat in Minnesota may be a blessing in disguise for Adlai Stevenson. The front runner must have a pacesetter.' In making such a statement, Chairman Butler clearly showed his partisanship, despite his promises not to take sides between candidates on the presidential nomination.

"All Senator Kefauver has ever asked is the opportunity for a fair hearing and a clear field in which to run. Like the voters in Minnesota, California's voters have a tradition of independence. I believe they will resent this effort by the national chairman to influence their thinking."

Chall: That was the press release that came out from the national campaign headquarters, but out of California?

Shirpser: Yes.

Chall: It was attributed to you, is that it?

Shirpser: Estes asked me to make the statement as national committeewoman for California in reply to what the National Committee chairman had stated. I also have a copy of a wire which Myrtle McIntyre sent to Chairman Butler. She was the national committeewoman from New Hampshire. Her husband is the United States senator from New Hampshire, Tom McIntyre.

She sent Paul Butler a strong wire, too, quoting that same press release of Butler's; about a "blessing in disguise, long distance runner needs pacesetter, is very disturbing. I voted for you as national chairman in the past on the basis of your pledge of official neutrality in the contest for Democratic presidential nomination of 1956. Continuation of this sort of pro-Stevenson statements from you will only bring disunity. Presidential primaries are the voice of the people. Your high





Shirpser: place in the party demands you be receptive to their message, and not officially supporting one man's candidacy."

In some ways Mytle McIntyre's wire was even stronger than my press release. Martha Ragland from Tennessee also sent him a strong wire reminding him of his pledge of neutrality to her, and that his statement was completely pro-Stevenson.

Obviously, Paul Butler didn't like this. I have a two-page letter telling me why. He explains that he was asked by the press to comment on the Minnesota primary. And he said, "Minnesota primary was not conclusive as to either Senator Kefauver or Governor Stevenson. (That, of course, is obvious, too.)

"Then I was asked whether I thought Stevenson was in a more favorable position now because he was not the front runner. The United Press quoted me, 'If Kefauver is now considered to be the front runner for the nomination, Stevenson might consider it more advantageous to him. Any miler or long distance runner has always preferred to have a pacesetter ahead of him so he can judge what is needed for the final sprint.'"

Well, I don't find this different than what the United Press quoted him as saying in nationwide press releases. What he is saying is that while Kefauver won the primary, Stevenson's defeat is of value to Stevenson. This certainly is not logical.

Paul Butler wrote to me: "If you consider these remarks either pro-Stevenson or anti-Kefauver then you are able to read into this something that is not there." This doesn't make sense to me and it never did.

Then he goes on to say that we must not attack each other and so forth.

Chall: Isn't that the letter that also has a sentence in it about people who get too emotionally involved with the candidate?

Shirpser: Oh, yes. "I'm fearful that other Democrats who are strong in their attachments to a particular candidate may wear their political feelings on their sleeves, and attack other Democrats with no provocation whatsoever. This lack of political equilibrium in the stress and strain of a campaign often does more damage to the fabric of the party than the constant attack of the opposition."



Shirpsen: Well, this is editorializing, without validity, in my thinking. However, he sent me his regards, and says he is looking forward to meeting me and seeing me in Washington in April.

I wrote him a long letter explaining my stand again, and reiterating that I felt his press release was pro-Stevenson and anti-Kefauver as did people all over California and all over the United States.

DeLancey Smith, who, as I told you, is an older man who becomes nasty when he's had too much to drink. He felt that I didn't give him the respect and the prestige that his exalted position deserved. He contributed funds, but you paid a big price for his contribution.

He was a well-known attorney. He wrote a letter to Paul Butler saying that my statement was not correct as it applied to California voters, and that he did not think that Mr. Butler said anything derogatory about Estes, or for Stevenson.

I immediately wrote to Estes and reminded him that I had sent out this press release at his request, and that DeLancey Smith referred to a completely different incident. He was so confused in his letter that he was talking about another and different statement that Paul Butler made.

So, Estes wrote him a strong letter asking him not to wash his dirty linen in public, or words to that effect, and to confer with me before sending out press releases. What DeLancey Smith was referring to was Paul Butler's debate with Leonard Hall on March 25 over television, of which I approved. I thought that what Paul Butler said then was good. And that's what DeLancey Smith thought I was criticizing.

Again, heaven protect you from your so-called friends.

#### Kefauver's Triumph at the CDC Convention

Chall: The CDC convention in February. Is this the CDC book?

Shirpsen: I haven't looked at it lately, but if you want to ask me questions...



- Chall: There were several problems, of course, in the CDC convention. One was the national election of Kefauver and Stevenson, and there was the senatorial race.
- Shirpser: There was a contest between Sam Yorty and Dick Richards. There wasn't much doubt that the convention would support Dick Richards, an excellent candidate. In fact, Yorty was very angry at the treatment he got there when he got up to speak and the delegates started booing. So he left the platform after telling them where-to-go in no uncertain terms, and what they could do with their endorsement.
- Chall: Didn't he say that the convention was stacked?
- Shirpser: Yes. I think that Sam Yorty deserved the courtesy of being allowed to speak. He was booed and hissed, so that he couldn't talk. You owe it to a man who is running for United States Senator as a Democrat to listen to him in a statewide convention. You don't have to agree with him, but you don't have to be rude and unfair.
- Chall: What had happened? Two years before he had received the CDC nomination; it had not gone all that smoothly, but he had at least received it. And two years after he lost that much strength, power, and following?
- Shirpser: In the first place they didn't like his previous campaign. They thought he had been much too reactionary. Then he moved to the right on issues. They were thoroughly opposed to him on that point. And they were for Dick Richards, who was a liberal, eloquent, fine young man who had held other political offices. He had been chairman of the Los Angeles County Central Committee, and I think he had been state senator, hadn't he?
- Chall: He may have been at that time. I don't remember. [He was a state senator. M.C.]
- Shirpser: He was a fine candidate. The CDC delegates were for him. They were opposed to Yorty. But they should have given him a hearing, and the booing and hissing was wrong, I thought.
- Chall: Peter Odegard and Dewey Anderson were interested in the nomination for senator at that convention?
- Shirpser: I'm not aware of it. Peter Odegard's big thrust was in '54, when the momentum had built up for him in the convention. There



Shirpser: was some talk before that convention, for him for governor, because so many people were not happy about Dick Graves, and they realized Peter Odegard's high qualifications.

But Peter may have been interested in the senate race. I think regarding that CDC book, we have to talk about this some time because there's much misinformation in it, and much lack of pertinent information, and I find it superficial. Also, it was Southern California oriented.

For instance, when Professor Harris from Southern California was interviewing me, he said that no history of the Democratic party could possibly be written without stressing my part in it.

The CDC club people at that time knew that I was the one who had started the club movement. They knew how I'd fought their battles in the Executive Committee of the State Central Committee, and the support I'd given them. In fact, they asked me to come to every committee hearing, and I was an honorary member of the board of directors.

And yet this author didn't even know that I existed. After all, I had been national committeewoman during those formative years. How could he be writing the history of the club movement in California without knowing that I was alive? If, for no other reason, this surely shows how superficial his analysis was. That sounds sort of self-seeking, but I don't really mean it that way. I guess I'm just using myself as an example of how limited his information was.

We come to the CDC convention now in Fresno in February, 1956, which was an important one because the clubs were growing in strength and in membership. I had been told ahead of time that the board of directors would undoubtedly recommend that they endorse the presidential candidate of their choice.

I'm trying to evaluate my position. It's true that I knew that the majority of the delegates who were coming to the convention were for Stevenson, but I truly think I was acting on principle when I went before the board of directors and urged them not to endorse at the presidential level.

These clubs had been set up with a specific purpose, which dealt with California issues. They had not endorsed the presidential nominees in the past. (I think that now they are doing it. Taking stands on many international issues has weakened





Shirpser: their strength in California in my opinion.) They were organized during the period when we had cross-filing, to be the grass-roots organization of the Democratic party.

Of course, they should study issues; they should take positions on those issues which affect California. Taking some extreme positions on national and international issues has weakened them, I think.

In 1956, we had forty thousand members. Recently, I was told that there are about fourteen thousand. I regret that they had lost so much membership. You cannot spread yourself that thin, taking stands on all issues, and do a good job.

I urged that the CDC board continue to stay with the local, regional, and statewide issues. I asked them to forget who I was for, (the presidential candidate), and who they were for. It was not their traditional role to endorse a presidential candidate, and I thought it would harm them. It would become divisive and start club members quarreling with each other.

I didn't think I would succeed with the CDC board. So I was very happy that they listened to me and respected my judgment. I'm sure they realized that I sincerely believed in what I was saying, and I think I had some influence in their decision not to endorse the presidential candidate.

Later, when the convention was stampeded by Kefauver's speech, I said to myself, "What did I do?" Because I think that they would have endorsed Estes Kefauver then.

But, I still think what I did was right. I did it for motives that had nothing to do with the Stevenson or Kefauver campaigns; it was a matter of principle. On that basis I'm still glad I did it, but there were times when I doubted whether I really was. [Laughs]

I came early, of course, to go to that board of directors meeting. As I went through hotel lobbies, I saw the way the Stevenson people were prepared. It was like the national convention. Placards, banners, noise makers, hats, buttons--they were all over the place. Wherever you went somebody was handing them to you.

There were tables set up in the lobby asking people to register for Stevenson. I have never seen more complete organization. Then, when I met with Tom Carrell, I went over



Shirpser: the plans with him and realized that we had practically nothing prepared for Kefauver.

Stevenson was to be on national television. Estes was not; we didn't have the funds. We had paper buttons, and a few small hand-lettered placards. The contrast was bad, and as more and more friends who were for Stevenson talked to me, I was appalled at what was going to happen to Estes in that CDC convention.

Then we went to the airport to meet Estes. I had done some preliminary talking with Kefauver people, trying to urge them to work harder and to do all they could for Kefauver. Both candidates had a reception planned for the last night of the convention. At least I hoped that we could get a good crowd there, and whatever publicity was possible, as a result.

We met Estes at the airport and he had a big crowd there, and much support. I was riding back in the car with him and I passed him a little note because I didn't want to say anything in front of Tom and Lyle and John, who would have resented the fact that I needed to talk to him privately. I wrote, "It is urgent that I speak to you alone for a few minutes. I have news the others don't have, and I must talk to you before you make your speech. Please find time to see me. I will wait in my room until you get word to me."

Estes sent his secretary, Don, to tell me to come to his suite almost immediately. They got me in by back door so everybody wouldn't see me. I told Estes about the meeting of the board, and how I had urged them against endorsing. I told him of the tremendous preparations for Stevenson. I told him that people I trusted told me that at least 75 percent of the delegates were for Stevenson. I said that I had read the advance copy of his speech and that it was a fine speech, but it was not the speech to give to this convention.

I was so close to Estes and he trusted me so much. He wanted my comments. I have a copy of his intended speech here. But, it was not the speech to give to the CDC at that time.

I told him that this was a very liberal group, that the most important issue to them was civil rights. I reminded him that Emmett Till had been murdered recently, lynched. It was one of the worst incidents in the history of the South. Estes had such a splendid record for civil rights, and for integration, and especially so, because he came from a southern state.



Shirpser:

I said, "Civil rights is one of the main issues that will sway this convention, and Adlai has been much more moderate about it. In fact, I read in a recent press conference that he hadn't been willing to support a bill which was to cut off funds for schools that refused to be integrated."

So, I said, "In the past, you have strongly supported integration and supported civil rights, and you have denounced what is happening. Please make this the main part of your speech. The Dixon-Yates deal, the pension aid you introduced, the increased parity for farmers, all of these things matter to this convention. I don't know what Adlai's speech is going to be, but you need to come out on the liberal side of every single issue in order to cut into that support."

I must quote from Arthur Caylor's resume of this CDC convention because he had a fine insight into what actually happened. I have many other newspaper articles, from Doris Fleeson, who speaks of Stevenson and civil rights and how much more Estes did at that CDC convention with his liberal speech, to sway people in his favor. The New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal had full coverage on the front page. There's a big article in the San Francisco Chronicle on the first day of the convention, "Negro Democrats shift to Kefauver."

Franklin Williams, who was the national head of the NAACP, had written to Estes and to Adlai and sent them a whole list of questions which they wanted to be answered. So Assemblyman Byron Rumford and Franklin Williams (both blacks) and Reverend Lawrence Odom, who was one of the influential black ministers in Oakland (the local head of the NAACP for Alameda County, and who was a Stevenson supporter), all came to see Estes. I got there first, fortunately, with the information Estes needed. Estes answered forthrightly everything they wanted to know.

I had the privilege of introducing Estes at the CDC convention. Paul Ziffren introduced Adlai. This was one of the proud moments of my life. I really put my heart as well as my mind into my speech of introduction, and I did emphasize Estes' great record and his courage and integrity. Many delegates knew how close I was to Estes, and how much this mattered to me, too. I got quite a good ovation from my introduction of Estes, and Estes was very pleased with what I said. It's there, if anybody ever wants to read it.

Later, I read in the Wall Street Journal that Estes was interrupted forty-three times by applause, and Adlai only



Shirpser: twenty-three times. Now this is such a reversal of the usual thing that happened when Adlai and Estes both spoke. But Estes stood there, tall and strong, forthright, and calm, and spoke with strength and sincerity.

He took one issue after another and he went down the line; it was really masterful. I think that it was the best speech he ever made in all the years I knew him, and he made it at a time when it counted tremendously.

Arthur Caylor (he was editor of the San Francisco News) wrote, "Kefauver not only stole the ball at the Fresno convention of Democratic Clubs last weekend, he also scared the whole Stevenson team, which comprises almost everybody in the Democratic party, plum clean to death.

"Once more my agents can tell you how he did it. In the face of a situation that was stacked against him as much as lumber is stacked in a lumber yard, it would be worth a column to tell you." He says, "The California Democratic Clubs organization was in Stevenson's pocket.

"Lady Luck grabbed Estes Kefauver by the hand, for a couple of chance reasons. Instead of getting global, he just kicked things around with the delegates. The first thing you know he had won lots of friends and influenced a lot of people. This came about partly because his gang didn't have the dough to put him on television. So, he talked to the folks who were there in the hall, not to some unseen faceless television listener.

"His talk ran twice as long as he had intended because of all the applause he received. Stevenson, when it came his turn, was under the whiff of the clock (because he was on national television). He didn't speak to the people in the hall, who would have to do the sweaty work in his campaign in this state, but to that unseen television audience.

"He had a prepared speech, trimmed to fit the clock, and it was tuned to a high note. He dealt with statesmanship rather than politics. He followed a rule, which he had laid down for himself--he won't commit himself on a question he may be called to decide upon if he's elected president.

"This is a judicial attitude, but it is not politically sound. After they'd heard Estes make his warm, personalized, liberal speech, and seeing the audience there react, many





Shirpser: convention leaders urged Stevenson to ditch his speech and to talk off the cuff. They saw what was coming, but they couldn't budge him one bit.

"As a result, Kefauver is twice the candidate in California than he was before the convention met, to sew it up for Stevenson."

There's a lot more in the Caylor article. He writes of Lady Luck and Franklin Williams of NAACP, and their influence. He refers to the twenty questions on the telegram that Williams sent him.

"It got his mind to move in this personalized groove, 'I'm for this and I'm against that.' (I wrote in the Caylor column margin, 'Me, too!'" [Laughs] Sometimes I editorialized these articles, you see.) [Laughter]

"Well, given these lucky breaks the Tennessee senator then helped himself on his own. He was at it for hours. He shook hands with practically all the delegates there, who had already signed a souvenir card for Adlai's birthday. But most of those who signed went around to the Kefauver reception too."

I must tell you a little more about that, because as we left the hall, the convention had to adjourn, everybody ran in the aisles to shake Estes' hand and to put their arms around him. They had to adjourn because the whole convention erupted around him.

I almost got knocked down in the crowd. I was in back of Estes, and I had my arms around Estes' waist the whole way to keep my footing. Tom Carrell and the others were trying to break trail in front of Estes to get him through. They were rushing at us from all sides. It must have taken us a half-hour to get out of that convention hall.

Person after person was pulling off his or her Stevenson button and throwing it on the floor. The floor was literally covered with Stevenson buttons. It was one of the most triumphant hours for Estes. It made me feel so good to see him come into his own through his own ability, and the way he seized the opportunity. He was not expedient, everything he said was backed up by his record.



Shirpser: Then, that night we were rather concerned about the Kefauver reception because we figured that most of the delegates might still be for Stevenson. How many people throw their buttons off in a moment of excitement, and then maybe change their minds again? But, we were mobbed at our reception. We ran out of food and drinks.

We were standing in a sort of reception line shaking hands. Many people came to me and said, "Clara, now I see why you were for Estes. Now I understand why you support this man." You know, it was a wonderful time for me, too, of course.

Then, I looked over toward the door and there was Adlai with several of his top people. So, I left the line and I went to Adlai and said, "Welcome, Adlai. How kind of you to come here."

So, he said something humorous to the effect, "Well, you know I always like to be where the Democrats are, and here is certainly where they are tonight, so I thought I would come and join you."

We immediately brought Adlai to Estes, and Estes welcomed him cordially. There were pictures of them taken together at the reception. Adlai stood there with Estes, meeting people. That was a wonderful note, really good sportsmanship on Stevenson's part.

Remember, Adlai hadn't said anything bad about Estes, and Estes hadn't said anything derogatory about Stevenson. It was after the Minnesota primary that the climate changed. This CDC convention was a happy time for me; one of the few happy times in the whole primary.

Chall: How did Estes feel about it, off by himself, later?

Shirpser: Oh, he was truly happy. Another reason that entered into it; he told the convention he had to turn around and go back to Washington because a very important vote on water and power was coming up, and he had to be there. So, he lost two days of campaigning in California. This convention support helped to make it up.

All of these articles are front page: Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post--excellent national coverage--Time magazine, Newsweek. It was simply marvelous coverage, for



Shirpser: Estes, more than you could have possibly thought would happen, prior to his great speech at that convention.

Chall: Do you think that in the long run it affected the campaign? Did people who came in and said, "Now, I know why you're for him," did they stay with Kefauver to the end?

Shirpser: Yes, we gained some important people from organized labor, and from the black community, too. Reverend Odom came out publicly for Estes, and Estes spoke at a meeting Reverend Odom had for him. This had great influence in Alameda County. And Franklin Williams' support came too, which was national in scope.

So, I think what Estes accomplished there with the senior citizens as well as the young Democrats, with organized labor (of course he spoke strongly on labor issues) and with the more liberal people because of his stand on civil rights, did carry through.

I think one of Estes' great handicaps throughout the whole primary was his lack of funds. He ended the primary, again, with a tremendous personal deficit because the people supporting him were not the people who give big sums.

I sent out a press release saying, "The performance of Senator Kefauver in Fresno last weekend electrified the national political atmosphere, as well as in California."

I spoke to a Tenth Congressional District caucus of Kefauver supporters which was convened to designate delegates... "It was his masterful outline, issue by issue of his position, and his record on current problems, that won his audience and we're still getting favorable reports from the eastern press and magazines that are national in scope.

"The Fresno meeting will go down as a milestone in the 1956 presidential campaign." Then it tells of my position in the party and then said, "Some of the press people told me they could hardly believe the Democratic Club movement in California is only three years old and already so strong as was evidenced in Fresno."

We had two thousand people there. The clubs don't have that much strength now, unfortunately.



Shirpser: The next clippings I have, cover some of the charges that were made by both Adlai and Estes against each other. This was the painful part of this primary campaign, and I felt very badly about it.

### The Campaign Heats Up

Chall: This came after Minnesota?

Shirpser: Yes. And it got worse and worse as time went on; from the Kefauver camp the charges of bosses and attacks on Paul Ziffren, and even on Bill Malone in San Francisco, who had been state chairman and who had been close to Ellie Heller. There were all these references to the Heller-Malone machine. All these personalities were dragged in, and Adlai was accusing Estes of smear tactics and saying derogatory things about him.

This really hurt. It was so unlike each of them, and I'm sure they were both pressured by their supporters into believing that this was the only way they could win. I think they diminished each other and themselves in so doing. I felt terrible about it.

In this regard, we spoke of some of the travels that I made on my own, campaigning for Estes. I had good meetings, as a rule. Mostly they were women's meetings, but sometimes they were in the evening with both men and women attending. I thought the coverage I got, which enabled me to speak for Kefauver through the press and radio and television, was helpful.

Campaigning with Estes in Denver, we ran into a difficult situation. Both Adlai and Estes had been asked to come to speak to a statewide convention at the University of Colorado, which is outside of Denver. Howard McGrath came there too, and we talked very frankly. We realized that Estes' chances were running down.

Chall: Then this is about the end of the campaign?

Shirpser: It was towards the end of the campaign. I think the Colorado and Florida primaries were close together. But Estes' group and Adlai's group ran into each other as we came into the convention hall at the University of Colorado.





Chall: You and who?

Shirpser: Estes and I on the one hand, and Bill Blair and Adlai on the other. My heart sank. I always had this feeling of being torn apart. I belonged with Adlai, and I was here with Estes. I belonged with Estes, but I should be with Adlai, too. This disturbed me all through the campaign.

So, I saw Bill Blair and I motioned to him that I wanted to talk to him. At one point in the conference, there was a recess. I noticed Bill walking out. So, I went out, too, in his direction.

Chall: This was what conference?

Shirpser: A statewide convention before the Colorado primary. Both Adlai and Estes were there to make addresses, and they both sat on the platform, and they both were friendly to each other. There was no problem there.

But I went off in the corner with Bill and said that I wanted to talk with him. I never said this publicly before, but Bill remembers it. I said, "Bill, you know how I've suffered through this campaign. I feel so guilty seeing Adlai there and not supporting him."

He said, "We understand perfectly, Clara. We know that you've never said one derogatory word, and your being in the campaign has helped to keep it from going off the deep end even worse than it presently is. I feel very badly too, and so does Adlai about this happening now."

I said, "Can I tell you something off-the-record and trust you to keep it in complete secrecy?" He said, "You know you can, you always have, as I have with you."

So, I said, "Look, Bill. If Estes can't make it in California--remember that I'm not saying he's going to lose--but if he can't win, I do have influence with Estes, and he does appreciate that I've given up my political career to support him."

I said, "He's probably the closest friend I have in the world." My loyalty to him will never end. If he continues to seek the nomination, I'll stay with him. If he decides to withdraw, I'm telling you in complete secrecy, I will do my utmost to influence him to withdraw in favor of Adlai."



Shirpser: He said, "Well, this is good news. I never dreamed there was a possibility of it." I said, "There may not be. I'm not saying this is a possibility. I'm not even saying it's a probability, I'm just telling you what my attitude is. So you, at least, will know that whatever happens, if Estes should lose and should decide to withdraw, I will do my best to influence Estes to withdraw in favor of Adlai."

He said, "May I tell Adlai?" I said, "I know if you ask him to keep this in complete secrecy he will do so." He said, "I can't imagine it will happen though." I said, "I can't either, but I would try."

So, I did go on the record with Bill Blair a few weeks before Estes' withdrawal. Because Bill Blair remembers and has spoken of it to me since, and Adlai remembered, too.

Howard McGrath and I talked as frankly as we dared at that point.

Chall: What do you mean by "as frankly as we dared..."?

Shirpser: We were both depressed at the mounting evidence that Estes could not win against Adlai in the last two important primaries, in Florida and then in California. We could not bear to tell each other that, but we both feared what did eventually happen. We had to keep hoping for and working toward victory for Estes.

In California I was having much grief with people who were not of leadership quality. Instead of helping, they often put obstacles in my path, and were jealous of my close relationship with Estes.

But, nationally, it was fine. I went back to Washington, at least twice, on policy meetings. Howard McGrath and Jiggs Donohue and I saw eye to eye on almost everything. They gave me every cooperation I could want. They made me feel that I had something of value to contribute.

I had a close and friendly relationship with both of them which continued through the campaign and afterwards, too. Whenever I was in Washington I always saw Jiggs. Howard died some time ago.

Chall: Was there other women who were close in the campaign strategy? Mabelle Kennedy, Martha Ragland?

Shirpser: Yes. Martha worked hard and capably in the primaries, headquartered in Washington, D.C. Mabelle had been assistant-treasurer of the



Shirpser: United States, under President Truman. She was a very capable woman. She came from Oklahoma. Later, we were both vice-chairmen nationally on the Kefauver vice-presidential campaign.

There were some very capable women in our delegation too. They were well known in their districts.

Chall: Was Martha Ragland part of the primary campaign?

Shirpser: Oh yes. She was very active for Estes in Tennessee, and other states.

Chall: What about nationally, then? Were you the only woman who had a national appointment for the primaries?

Shirpser: Yes, I was the only one who was co-chairman with Howard McGrath and with Jiggs Donohue. I don't remember what office Martha had. I think that she was in Washington, D.C. in the national campaign office there.

Chall: So, you really did have a prominent position, an important central position?

Shirpser: One of the three top positions. Co-chairman, equally with Howard and Jiggs.

Chall: And they didn't relegate you to the women's meetings?

Shirpser: No. I sat in on policy and strategy too.

#### Kefauver Loses the California Primary

Shirpser: Estes lost decisively in the 1956 California primary.

Chall: It's hard to say how you all felt, but you might as well try to tell me.

Shirpser: We went to Los Angeles, Ad and I, and the Hyatts and many other friends from Northern California. We were all in Estes' suite listening to the returns. You could have cut the gloom with a knife, 'it was so thick. I've never seen more depressed, saddened people anywhere, because we knew the importance of this primary to Estes. We knew that this was the beginning of the end of his presidential hopes.



Shirpser: It was a very tragic pill to swallow. Estes was a good sport about it. He never allowed others to see his depression, but later when I had a private talk with him he was terribly downcast. He'd worked so hard and had such high hopes and such a deep conviction about the importance of public service. He did not want to let his supporters down. This was one of his greatest disappointments.

(Interview 14, March 28, 1973)

Shirpser: In going over this material, I have tried to place it chronologically, because many events happened in this period, prior to the Kefauver primary in California, about which I probably haven't said enough, but it was such an unhappy time for me. There were so many problems, and so many complaints, and my own sad feeling of being divided, that I prefer to skip much of this time.

Chall: You'll probably find that much has been said.

Shirpser: Maybe I have. It was a painful time.

I did find a very amusing letter, and a very perceptive one, I think, from Irene Erdman. She was Professor Henry Erdman's wife, both of whom were good friends and neighbors. Irene had a long background in politics, going back to Governor Olson's successful campaign for governor of California, when she was, I believe, women's chairman for the state.

Lyle Cook was active in that campaign for Olson. Since I've said some derogatory but not unfair (factually) things about Lyle Cook, and his nomination of my opponent when I was running for national committeewoman, it might be interesting to have another woman's opinion.

Irene wrote: "The appointment of Lyle Cook as Northern California chairman for Estes Kefauver was probably a wise one, although he has no particular leadership, it's better to have that type for than against." (This was early in 1956.)

She goes on to write, "He's dangerously ambitious, and will apply any device to obtain his purpose for the advancement of Lyle Cook. I had much personal experience with him in the days when I was active in politics."





Shirpser: In her last paragraph she writes: "He always has some devious scheme up his little sleeve. And his machinations would disturb the equanimity of a saint. Therefore, you would have to be more than a saint, at least much more clever. Preserve a sweet, and if necessary, slightly stupid serenity, a convenient deafness, a sense of humor (even if strained), and avoid discussions with him except in the presence of a reliable witness or two." [Laughter]

I couldn't resist putting in that letter.\*

#### Vacation in Hawaii: Meeting Democratic Party Leaders

Shirpser: Early in 1956 Ad insisted that I needed a vacation, or I probably wouldn't survive the coming primary campaign. So, we decided to go to Hawaii.

We had been there many times because of Ad's business, the Mosler Safe Company. He had established contact with one of the large importing and exporting firms there, who were now representing Mosler Safe Company. Whenever there was a big bank expansion where they needed the planning (Ad was a vault engineer), he could help them design, and he knew the type of equipment they needed.

We were always delighted when they needed him in Hawaii because he could go on business, which is a deductible expense. And the extra cost for me was not much.

Governor John Burns

Shirpser: So, I got to know Democrats in Hawaii very well. Among them was one of my very dear friends, John Burns, whom I had met at the National Committee early in my career there. He was representing Hawaii, which was then a territory. He was, more than any other person, responsible for Hawaii's statehood, in my opinion. Jack went on to win election as governor of the Hawaiian Islands. (He is now serving his third term.)\*\*

I liked Jack immensely, and we worked well together. I think I was of some help to him, at least he always has said so.

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\*Permission to quote granted by Henry Erdman. C.S.

\*\*John Burns died April 6, 1975.



Shirpser: At that time he was chairman of the Oahu County Democratic Central Committee in Hawaii, too.

He always met us at the airport with leis for Ad and me, and he was especially friendly. I understood later that few of the political leaders had ever been invited to his home, but we were. He lived in a small town on the other side of the island, over the Nuuanu Pali.

To bring us to his home, Jack sent Daniel Inouye, who was then his assistant in the Oahu Central Committee. He now is U.S. Senator from Hawaii. We met him in the lobby. I noticed one sleeve was pinned up, and that he had only one arm. The thought of crossing the Pali, which is all mountainous curves--with a driver with only one arm--was worrying, but I didn't say a word, of course. Evidently there was something in my face that showed him that I was a little concerned.

He said, "Clara, don't worry. I learned to drive with one arm whenever I had a pretty girl along side of me, so I can still do it just as well." I appreciated his delightful humor and how well he handled that situation. Dan is an excellent senator, and we've kept our friendship through the years.

Some people in the Hawaiian Islands said that Jack was quite radical, and that Harry Bridges was supporting him. Well, if you had seen their home, which was as clean as could be, but just a modest little house, you couldn't believe that anyone subsidized Jack Burns.

Chall: At that time what was he?

Shirpser: He was the Democratic county chairman of Oahu.

Chall: How was he making a living?

Shirpser: I think he was a realtor then. He had formerly been a policeman, I think. The focal point of his strength was the wonderful relationship he established with all of the minority groups.

He was the one who originated the phrase you've often heard me use. He always said, "Americans of Hawaiian ancestry; Americans of Japanese ancestry; Americans of Chinese ancestry," etc. He never said Chinese-Americans. He put "Americans" first. I think that's an excellent way. Because these are Americans who came from a certain ancestry which has great value in our melting-pot type of democracy.



Shirpser: Jack really worked for those groups. Later, when he did run for governor, that was a main part of his strength. He had developed excellent rapport with them and had given them responsibility, and given them any political positions he could, and helped elect them to the legislature. So, when he decided to make the race he had a good base of support.

It wasn't easy to run against the Republican party, which was so well established, including many wealthy families of Hawaii, that went back for generations. These minority groups were the new people.

Another amusing incident that comes to mind: I invited Jack to have cocktails and lunch with me at our hotel, just the two of us, so we could really talk. I waited in my room for him, and about one-thirty he phoned me and said that something had gone wrong with his car and he was stuck on the Pali. Somebody else was calling for him, and he would get to my hotel as soon as he could.

I went down to the beach and left word where I was. I came back after a swim and he still hadn't arrived. Then, I ran into a problem because Ad phoned that he had invited a prominent banker for cocktails before dinner. The bankers I had met in Honolulu were all very conservative and very anti-civil rights and not for equality for minority groups in the Hawaiian Islands.

For instance, we were invited to the Oahu Country Club by a banker and his wife, and he told me, "This is the last bastion of democracy." He actually said it that way. "Because only Caucasians can come here as guests, and people of other races can only work here." I sat there--counting to ten--because I could hardly refrain from telling him what I thought, but I didn't dare because of Ad's business connections with him. I told Ad, "We'd better never come to this country club again because this is not a place I want to be."

Estes had previously asked me to contact the former governor of Tennessee, whose name I've forgotten. He was an elderly man who had retired, and was now living in the Hawaiian Islands. Estes warned me that he was quite conservative, but a very good friend of his. I had invited him, too, for cocktails before dinner that night.

I thought that he and the banker would get along just fine. I think they were coming about five o'clock, and about a quarter to five I got a call that Jack Burns was in the lobby. I knew



Shirpsen: that Jack was reputed to be rather radical, but I knew this was untrue. Still, I feared that he and the banker and the former governor of Tennessee might not be congenial, to say the least.

Well, there was nothing to do but to bring Jack to cocktails with them. He was on his way up to my room when the phone rang again and there was the former governor of Tennessee in the lobby. I said, "We'll be right down, if you'll just wait a minute, because a friend of mine is on the way up."

I explained to Jack what the situation was and I said, "Will you please come to this small cocktail party? You probably won't like any of these people, but at least you and I can talk." He said, "Of course I'll come. I'll be glad to meet them."

Later, the banker told Ad that I'd made history! Nobody in Hawaii had ever arrived for cocktails in a public place with--imagine it this way--on the left side, Jack Burns, and on the right side, the governor, to meet this conservative banker. Fortunately, they were all gentlemen. They were all polite, though it was a little strained at first.

But I did my best to make everyone feel at ease. After a couple of drinks everybody felt better and it worked out just fine.

An interesting thing happened while I was in Oahu. I ran into Bill Roth, William Matson Roth. Lewers and Cook was the name of the firm which represented Mosler, and they had made reservations for us at the Hawaiian Village Hotel. Naturally, we went where they asked us to go. Then I ran into Bill Roth, whose family were large stockholders and officials of Matson Navigation Company, who owned all the other hotels at Waikiki: The Princess Kiaulani, the Royal Hawaiian, the Moana Hotel, etc.

Bill said, "Where are you staying?" I said, "I don't want to tell you." He said, "Why?" I said, "It isn't one of your hotels." He said, "What's the difference?"

So, I explained where I was. He said, "I want to give a party for you." I said, "That would be wonderful." He asked me who my friends were. I mentioned the national committeewoman, Dolores Martin, and the national committeeman, Jack Burns, and





Shirpser: other people I knew well.

He said, "I'm going down the list and ask all the official Democrats. We'll have a big Democratic get-together." After the invitations were sent out, I must have gotten a dozen phone calls, some from people I didn't know, saying, "I'd like to know why Bill Roth, a Republican, is giving a party for you when you're our Democratic National Committeewoman."

I said, "He's a Democrat!" The answer was: "I don't believe it." You see, Bill's family background had been solidly conservative Republican. That's why it's so amazing that he's such a staunch, liberal Democrat.

Chall: Is he from Hawaii? Is his business in Hawaii?

Shirpser: His family came from Hawaii, and are often there, but he lives in Marin County. He had an executive position with the Matson Navigation Company in San Francisco; then he founded his own business after Matson was purchased by Pacific Far East Lines.

He was head of the Council for Civic Unity in San Francisco, which works most effectively for racial equality. He's always been a most loyal, generous contributor. He's had campaign posts with most Democratic candidates' campaigns--especially Adlai Stevenson. He was almost most friendly and helpful to me. I think he's a wonderful person. I have the greatest admiration for him. (He's now running for the office of governor of California in the Democratic primary, 1974.)

Chall: Did he have a national post in the Democratic party?

Shirpser: Later, he had an important role in the Kennedy administration. He always was one of the people to whom any Democrat who was running for office could turn, urging him to hold some executive position in their campaign. He almost always did, and he worked very hard and effectively.

Bill had this lovely party on the roof garden of the hotel Princess Kiaulani. It was very helpful for me to meet so many Democrats whom I hadn't previously known. I think it was good for Bill, too, because up to that time few had realized that he was a Democrat.

Another good friend I made in the Hawaiian Islands was Gregg Sinclair, who is the president emeritus of the University



Shirpser: of Hawaii, and a very fine, intelligent Democrat, who had been on several national committees dealing with education. We became very good friends. I always saw him and his lovely wife every time we went over. They were most hospitable, and we had many enjoyable visits.

At Bill's party a very good looking young man came up and threw his arms around me, put a lei around my neck, kissed me on each cheek and said, "Aloha, Clara." I looked at him, and I knew he looked familiar, but years had gone by since I had last seen him.

He said, "I can't tell you how hurt I am. I rang more doorbells for you when you ran for the assembly than anybody else in history. I'm Tom Gill." Well, then I identified him. He had been a student at U.C., when I ran for the assembly. Now he is lieutenant governor of Hawaii. He is one of the young men I started in politics, according to the good news which he gave me.

All of these Hawaiian visits really had political connotations, too.

Chall: This was one visit?

Shirpser: There were several visits over the years.

Then, to finish this story of Hawaiian experiences, Jack was elected governor of Hawaii (during his campaign I sent letters to all my friends there, and I had gotten to know quite a few people by then. Also I was delighted to send a contribution and collected several from friends here.) Jack won the election with a good majority.

I didn't mention that his wife, Bea, is in a wheelchair. She had polio when her children were small, and she brought up those children and did her own housework and her own cooking from that wheelchair. She has one of the most beautiful and spiritual faces I have ever seen.

You know, the suffering has etched lines in her face, and it is such a beautiful face. Her courage is really an inspiration. She's been a marvelous wife for Jack. She has a very warm, outgoing personality, and she campaigned with him, sitting in that wheelchair. She was a great asset, and still is.



Shirpser: To return to Hawaii, since Jack was elected governor twelve years ago, it is a great satisfaction to see them in this beautiful palace in which they live; to know that Bea has an attendant, and ramps have been built in the governor's mansion so she can get up and down in her wheelchair. She is very thin, very frail. But her spirit is so strong and indomitable that you forget her disability. I admire her tremendously. I have a close friendship with her, which I value greatly.

The first time we came over to the Islands, after Jack was governor, Ad warned me in advance, "Don't expect that Jack is now going to make much time available. Remember that he's governor, and don't be hurt if he's busy and can't see you." Before we went, I wrote to Jack and said that we were coming. I said to Ad: "I'll give you any odds you want that Jack will be the same person he always was, and he will find time to visit with us."

Bobbie (my daughter) was with us, too, to have a vacation in the Islands. We got there on a Sunday, and I phoned Governor Burns, knowing that the office was closed. But the minute I gave my name the operator, she said, "Governor Burns instructed me that the minute you called to put you through on his private line." Then I heard: "Aloha, Clara." Jack told me that he was leaving for the Orient the next day, and Bea was coming with him.

He had television interviews and press conferences and everything set up for the next day prior to his departure, but he still wanted us to come to his office and he would have a visit with us. We walked into his office at the Iolani Palace at the given time the next morning, and people were standing all around the periphery of that room as well as occupying every seat, and I almost left. But his secretary recognized me and motioned to us.

We went in ahead of everybody (they must have hated us), and Jack spent about forty-five minutes with us, taking us around the palace, showing us historical places and objects. The Iolani Palace was where the legislature was located, as well as his offices. He had arranged for us to have lunch at his home, which was the governor's mansion.

For him to be so devoted at a time when every minute was pressured, was most thoughtful and considerate.



Shirpsr: Jack was still the same down-to-earth, practical, pragmatic, capable, yet idealistic governor. This is his third term. He's been there for almost twelve years.

Bea and Jack have built themselves a lovely home on the other side of the islands. It's furnished and it's ready for them when Jack retires. So, they have a good life ahead. Whether he will run or not, I don't know. But he said the pressure was tremendous.

Now he has conservative support as well as the liberal. It's very interesting. They've finally come to know him as he is, and think he has been a great governor.

Chall: You saw him on your last trip? [1972]

Shirpsr: Oh yes. I had dinner at the mansion, Washington Place, last year, on my cruise to the Orient. They sent a car to the ship to get me and took me back to the ship again. I had a wonderful visit. They didn't have anyone else to dinner. They said they just wanted me alone, so we could really talk together.

Of course, we always do a lot of "remember whens." It's been a wonderful relationship. It's great to see a man who deserves it, succeed so well.

#### Second Round on the Convention Parade Resolution

Shirpsr: We haven't talked about my parade resolution. Should we do it now, or should we wait till later?

Chall: That deals with the convention, doesn't it?

Shirpsr: Yes, but it also deals with the earlier introducing of the resolution, long before the convention.

Chall: All right.

Shirpsr: I'll keep this brief, but it is a source of satisfaction to me, to know that I battled for it in '52, '56, and '60, each time I was at the convention. Whenever I went to the National Committee meetings I tried to get this resolution adopted, and never succeeded. And in 1968, which is sixteen years later than my





Shirpser: original motion, it finally was adopted. I think that my early pioneering efforts had some bearing on it, or so I hope.

We had an executive committee meeting in California of the State Central Committee in April of 1956, which was during the primary. I'd like to emphasize that even though I was working for Estes Kefauver, I was carrying on my full duties and responsibilities as national committeewoman, organizing meetings, bringing speakers out here, and raising funds for the National Committee. I campaigned whenever I could.

Lionel Steinberg, who was then holding an office on the State Central Committee, moved that "we concur with the National committeewoman's recommendation that all demonstrations for the 1956 Democratic National Convention be restricted to fifteen minutes, that all parades in the aisles be completely eliminated."

You know, those parades in the aisles took an hour sometimes, with people just yelling and hollering and shrieking. In fact, one of the things I said in my presentation was that California would yield to no one in our ability to holler, and yell, and scream, as loudly as any other delegation. But was this the best way to nominate our best candidate? I didn't think it was a good use of television time.

Obviously, people get disgusted and leave their TV sets. We could use that time more valuably. This was the way I wanted that time used: "that an invitation be extended to each candidate for the nomination who receives at least 15 percent of the vote on the first ballot for the office for the president of the United States, to address the convention for a period of not more than fifteen minutes."

I don't think that people realize that many of the delegates have never even seen their candidates in person. No matter how hard a candidate works in a state the size of California, he can't possibly meet more than a small fraction of the people. They've heard him in campaign speeches and on television and radio, but they've never heard him present himself in person as a candidate for president of the United States.

Look how many homes were being reached by such a candidate on convention television. It might be the difference between winning or losing. Now, surely this could not be interpreted as anti-Stevenson because Adlai Stevenson was our best speaker. He was immeasurably more eloquent than Estes Kefauver or Harriman, who were the leading opponents in 1956.



Shirpser: I sent out a letter--after I had the backing of the State Central Committee, which was an official backing (which I hadn't had in '52)--to all the National Committee members (which I will put in the files) in which I explained the arguments and told them that I have had an excellent response from National Committee members with whom I've talked through the years about this, and from members of Congress, too. I asked them if they did approve the idea, would they please let me know, saying I would greatly appreciate their advice and suggestions.

Congressman Jimmy Roosevelt put it into the Congressional Record, making a speech in the House of Representatives. He approved of it, and he was our California congressman. His article explained what I had done and why I had done it, and gave the idea enthusiastic support.

Then I had a very good boost from the Oakland Tribune, May 23, 1956, in which they wrote very favorably of the idea on their editorial page on a Sunday (which is the best time to get favorable editorial coverage). Quote: "Mrs. Shirpser contends the time would be better utilized to get the candidates before the delegates and before the nationwide television audience.

"Veteran political observers who have been subjected to interminable synthetic demonstrations over the years would welcome such a procedure. We have an idea that the TV production managers will have the final say on this one."

Well, as it turned out, Paul Butler, our chairman, had the final say on this one. I presented it to the National Committee and Earl Behrens' headline in the San Francisco Chronicle states: "Shirper's anti-hoopla plan loses." It was going very well until Paul Butler got up and said, "This would steal the thunder of the acceptance speeches on the following day." I don't think it would have. Many National Committee members agreed with me, although the majority followed Paul Butler's recommendation that they vote "no."

An acceptance speech, and a speech from a contender for the nomination are very different types of speeches. I'm confident that we wouldn't have lost our television audience as we did during parades, and we would have used our time much more valuably; probably only two or three candidates would have gotten 15 percent of the vote.

Chall: Have you any idea what might have prompted his opposition? Would he have been acting solely on his own?



IT'S a question whether that Miami "debate" between Adlai Stevenson and Estes Kefauver wasn't so poor that it did both men more harm than good, but quite a number of those who saw the telecast frankly expressed belief that the edge—if any—went to Senator Kefauver. Perhaps the interest created by the "debate"—regardless of how you evaluated it—has given impetus to a recent proposal by Democratic National Committee woman Clara Shirpsier. Under a resolution submitted to the national committee by the Berkeleyan all demonstrations at the party's Chicago convention in August would be limited to 15 minutes, all parades in the aisles would be eliminated, and each candidate who received at least 15 per cent of the vote on the first ballot would then be allowed to address the convention for 15 minutes. Support of a candidate can be demonstrated without time-wasting applause and cavoring in the aisles, Mrs. Shirpsier contends, and the time better utilized to get candidates before the delegates and, of course, before the nationwide TV audience. Veteran political observers who have been subjected to interminable, synthetic demonstrations over the years undoubtedly would welcome such a procedure, but we have an idea the TV production managers will have the final say on this one.

# Adlai Aides Blunder

Last week the Knave had occasion to raise an eyebrow at some of the pronouncements of Adlai E. Stevenson. This week we have to commiserate with him because it seems he is being badly used by his local campaign committee. When Stevenson was last here, newspapers were flooded with conflicting announcements from rival factions in the Stevenson camp as to the time and place of his appearances. Since both groups insisted theirs was the official version, the only solution was to ignore both and turn to the candidate's Northern California campaign headquarters for correct information. Now that Stevenson is about to return to California, newspapers are once again forced to the same solution. The reason this time is that one wing of the local Stevenson committee persists in announcing that the candidate will be honored at a garden party reception in Berkeley from 3 to 5 p.m. next Saturday—despite the fact that it is well aware, and readily admits, that Stevenson will be nowhere near Berkeley at that time. The function is

purely and simply a money-raising affair and sponsors blandly point out that their announcements do not actually say that the candidate will be present. Wiser heads in the campaign know that such an obvious attempt to mislead might cost a lot of votes among Democrats gulled into attending in belief that the candidate would be on hand to greet them.





Shirpser: He probably did think it was a bad idea. The exuberance of the people letting off steam in the aisles, racing up and down, and yelling and hollering, was colorful, and had been traditional. It's hard to make changes, even for the better.

Many of them were in costume, the girls in very short skirts with big hats, and some men dressed up in red, white and blue "Uncle Sam" costumes. It was a contrived, superficial, and often boring television performance. I'm sure it didn't convince anybody in the convention, or the TV audience to vote for our Democratic candidate. It was just something that had been done in the past and was to be continued.

Joe de Silva said, "Well, that resolution might get Clara an 'A' in deportment, but it would not help our candidates." But our candidates, Estes, Adlai, and Averell Harriman, thought it would help them. I conferred with all three of them. They wanted this resolution to carry.

This was the sort of thing you have to work at for years and years to change something that's been established.

Chall: There's always the time-lag in public affairs.

Shirpser: Yes. But in 1968, Earl Behrens remembered. He had been writing about my plan during all three conventions. Remember, I told you how hard I worked to get it on the floor in 1952, and Sam Rayburn wouldn't even let me come up on the platform. Mr. Behrens wrote: "Clara Shirpser and California Democrats proposed, as early as 1952, that floor demonstrations be eliminated at the national convention.

"Sixteen years later the Democratic National Committee announced it will ban floor parades and move to end the spectacle such as marked the recent Republican convention." Then he goes on to say what my role had been all through '52, '56, '60.

Also, Earl mentioned something I had forgotten. When I spoke to Sam Rayburn after the 1952 convention, I said: "Why didn't you let me present that resolution when I had the Rules Committee's okay, and my delegation's okay; why did you refuse me the opportunity?" "Because the plan was silly," he said. He was as pragmatic as that. It was silly, he thought, so why should the convention hear about it?





Shirpser: "So, even though it took years to achieve our ends, it is interesting to know the idea was a California originated one, by Mrs. Shirpser, former Democratic National Committeewoman."

Chall: It wasn't all in vain. It takes time.

Shirpser: Yes, indeed.

Chall: And persistence. Many people aren't persistent enough on these things.

Shirpser: I've learned through the years that you've got to be patient. You don't accomplish your goals all at once. I have all these papers showing the different times I introduced the resolution and the different language I used. But, it was always for the same purpose, and it did finally come into being.

#### Clara Shirpser Replaced as National Committeewoman

#### Refusal to Switch to Stevenson

Shirpser: Robert Allen, who is married to Ruth Finney, was one of my closest and dearest friends in the press. I can't tell you how often he gave me ideas, and information I wouldn't have known otherwise. I always enjoyed seeing them when I went to Washington.

One day, Bob was here on a press assignment, and he called me and we had a long talk. He asked me, "You're going to switch to Stevenson now, surely, after Estes lost the California primary?" I said, "No, I can't do that, as long as Estes is still contesting."

So, he said he thought that Estes ought to withdraw. He had no chance of winning, and he would get some goodwill by withdrawing, and he was running further and further into debt. "Clara, for heavens sake, for my sake, for your sake, show some sense, and join the Stevenson delegation."

I said, "No, as long as Estes is a contender I'm going to be loyal to him." Then, a couple of days later I picked up the Berkeley Gazette and I found on the first page a byline by Robert Allen, a whole column stating, among other things,



Shirpser: "Clara Shirpser is switching to Adlai Stevenson."

Well, this horrified me! Bob couldn't have misunderstood what I said. I wrote him a letter with much reproach. "I've always trusted you. I've always depended on you! How could you do this to me?"

I have a long letter from him explaining that his material is written five to six days before publication, and before he left for California he thought, surely, I would have the good judgment to join the Stevenson delegation now that Estes didn't have a chance. That article was not a result of our conversation in Berkeley. His article was in the press and he couldn't have corrected it if he wanted to. Bob's letter is full of apologies and regrets.

Bob Allen was probably one of the most uninhibited people I ever knew. I never knew what he was going to say next! I liked him tremendously. For him to write the following to me really meant a great deal to me.

Bob Allen's letter: "I'm truly sorry I caused you this distress. You are the last person in the world I would want to do that to, in any manner, shape, or form. You are one of the very few people in politics who Ruth and I genuinely respect and esteem, whom we consider honest, and forthright, and sincere, and genuine in a sense that virtually no other so-called politicians we know are. So you can be assured that if I caused you any unhappiness I profoundly regret it, and I will do my utmost to make amends forthwith."

He did write another article with the correct facts.

This is another press release that I had to send out right away though it caused resentment among Stevenson people. The Call Pulletin used the headline: "Adlai camp fails to lure Mrs. Shirpser."

Quotes: "Clara Shirpser announced today in a press release that she had declined to join the convention delegation pledged to Adlai Stevenson." I mentioned that I had many good friends on the delegation, and they had invited me to join as an alternate. (It was too late to be a delegate.) I wrote that, "I had to decline because Senator Kefauver was still very much a candidate for the presidential nomination. As his national co-chairman, I will continue my support of his candidacy to the best of my



Shirpser: ability. To me, loyalty is one of the most important attributes of life. My preconvention loyalty is with Senator Kefauver. After the convention I shall work wholeheartedly for the Democratic nominee of our party."

Well, I wish I hadn't had to send that out because it looks like I'm just being difficult. I never would have sent that press release if it hadn't been for Bob Allen's front page story.

Chall: This was already rather late in June, wasn't it?

Shirpser: Yes, that was June 21, 1956. And all the papers carried it.

In early July the delegates for Stevenson met, who had won in the primary, to choose the new national committeewoman. It was a foregone conclusion that it would be Libby Smith.

Chall: Was it?

Shirpser: Yes. Mary Ellen Leary was one of the press people to whom I was close. She was the political editor for the San Francisco News. She was in Sacramento all during the legislative sessions. She was a Nieman Scholar, extremely intelligent and able. She was always very good to me, helping me, and telling me things I needed to know.

In fact, she took me aside before the end of the Kefauver primary, and she said, "Clara, you look terrible. You look exhausted. You look as if you're going to fall on your face any minute. I have to prepare you. No miracle is going to happen this time. Estes is going to lose the primary. Don't kill yourself. Don't break your heart."

I said, "I refuse to accept this!" She said, "All right, Clara, but start resigning yourself to it now. Start adjusting to it. It's inevitable. I don't want to see you have a nervous breakdown."

Because, in trying to continue my duties as national committeewoman, and keep the office going for the National Committee, and campaigning for and with Estes, I really was working far beyond my strength. I often wondered why I didn't collapse. I still wonder.

I know I couldn't do it today. It's lucky I got the National Committee post when I was less than fifty years old because I never could have survived it at a much later date.



Shirpsers: Mary Ellen Leary took me to lunch shortly before my term ended, and she wrote a four-column article, heading it, "Today's 'Goodbye' for Clara After Four-Year Demo Flight." May I put a few quotes in there in case somebody doesn't read the article? [San Francisco News, June 23, 1956.]

Chall: I certainly intend to put it inside, right next to the story. You don't have to quote much of it.

Shirpsers: Mary Ellen really understood me. Sometimes she was a little flippant and didn't take me seriously, but the article was humorous, too. I felt that she understood what I was trying to do.

In this article she writes, "Clara, as she's known to thousands of hard-working Democrats through the West, is Mrs. Clara Shirpsers." She goes on, "She has had a four-year flight into the outer spaces of the professional politician. And loved every minute of it." (Well, I wouldn't say I loved every minute of it, but I certainly loved the overall four years and what they brought me.)

"She still wears her title California's Democratic National Committeewoman, and will until the convention ends August 16. But today in Monterey, in secret session, the powers that be will pick her successor, and what's left for Clara is an exit line. She has no vote at the national Democratic convention. But she has the role. She'll be there until the dimming of the last floodlight."

Then she goes on to tell how I came into politics. She wrote: "Clara Shirpsers has been something novel in smoke-filled circles. Her departure will chink up a wholesome aperture in the back rooms through which, these past four years, decidedly errant breezes have sometimes scittered in, with feminine and frequently a valuable freshness."

Then she wrote that I had "been a genuine 'uplift' force in the country," and I brought this into politics. "She leaped straight from the amateur afternoon circuit to the 'pro' ranks in the world's most ruthless game. Politics knows no conference rules and keeps no conscience. But they never knocked Clara off her feet."

Then she says, in the beginning many "smirked and winked at her amateurisms," but she received "an accolade that the 'pros' rarely win. She has been truly courageous."





# Today's 'Goodbye' For Clara After 4-Year Demo Flight

It isn't an easy thing to give up the National Committee post. I wasn't bitter. I made my decision to support Estes knowing that I was giving up the National Committee post if he lost the California primary. I wouldn't be human if I didn't think, "Well, suppose I hadn't done it the way I did?"



# Today's 'Goodbye' For Clara After 4-Year Demo Flight

By Mary Ellen Leary

Today it's curtains for Clara. Not that she minds. She's had a wonderful time, thanks. And she'll still be seeing folks around.

Clara, as she's known to thousands of hard-working Democrats throughout the West, is Mrs. Clara Shirsper, Berkeley housewife and clubwoman who has had a four-year flight into the outer spaces of the professional politician. And loved every minute of it.

She still wears her four-year title—California's Democratic National Committeewoman, and will until August 16.

But today in Monterey, in secret session, the powers-that-be among California Democrats pick her successor and what's left for Clara is an exit line. She has no vote at the national Democratic convention in Chicago Aug. 13. But she has a role. She'll be there, to the dimming of the last floodlight.

## On a Loser

Clara's retirement, and the selection of some other woman—probably Mrs. Elizabeth R. Smith of Kentfield—follows from the donnybrook so recently headlined in California—the fight between Estes Kefauver and Adlai Stevenson for Democratic approval among Californians.

Clara was on the loser. Four years ago she was on the winner; that time Kefauver came in.

To be simple about it, that is how national committeewomen are chosen. Mrs. Shirsper took her risks with her runs and when

She leaped straight from the amateur afternoon circuit to the "pro" ranks in the world's most ruthless game. Politics knows no conference rules and keeps no conscience. But they never knocked Clara off her feet.

## Record of Courage

Be it said for the League of Women Voters which gave her training, she came through the experience with a frank accolade from many who smirked and winked at her amateurisms, an accolade the "pros" rarely win. She has been courageous.

Even now, with California's Democratic banners unfurled for Stevenson, she stands vigil at the post where Kefauver colors droop.

"My place is with Estes," she insists, "as long as he stays in there fighting."

She was a vice chairman of his campaign for the 22 Western states and she's still firm. But maybe loyalty to Kefauver is no test. This loyalty gave her political prestige four years ago.

## Mind of Her Own

What set Clara Shirsper apart for risk-all, rue-nothing bravado politics the voter seldom sees was shown two years ago. Democratic national chairman Stephen Mitchell publicly pulled party support away from two California candidates for Congress, James Roosevelt and Robert Condon.

Promptly Mrs. Shirsper pounded out her own



CLARA SHIRSPER

She backed a losing candidate.

## Bided Her Time

Similarly when the whole party organization—Clara alone excepted—burst the Stevenson boom in the very face of Harri- man, Clara scolded. And held herself apart. And chose her own time for indorsing Kefauver. "The League teaches you to

arrivals followed by 6 a.m. appearances at the candidate's side.

"The fatigue—that was the worst part of the program." A woman politician must be blessed with a patient husband and Clara's is. Adolph Shirsper, representative of the America

post. I wasn't bitter. I made my decision to support Estes knowing that I was giving up the National Committee post if he lost the California primary. I wouldn't be human if I didn't think, "Well, suppose I hadn't done it the way I did?"



Kefauver trailed election night, she knew she was out, too.

#### She Was Different

Today 10 battered office chairs, a desk, a filing cabinet, a work table, even a wooden wastebasket are being moved out of the Balboa Building private office she has used. She is giving them back to the Democrats.

Clara Shirpsr has been something novel in smoke-filled circles.

Her departure will chink up a wholesome aperture in the back rooms through which, these past four years, decidedly errant breezes have sometimes skirted in, with a feminine and frequently a valuable freshness.

#### The Feminine Touch

For Clara Shirpsr is the California clubwoman, come into her own.

Flowered hats, flowered print silk frocks, chatter, chirpy, cheery voice, the effervescence, the eagerness, the earnestness—all the recognizable traits of that alerted American womanhood that has been a genuine "uplift" force in the country, Clara Shirpsr brought along with her into politics.

Mr. Mitchell, she said, should mind his own business. Californians would mind theirs. A cautious, conservative hush held other party leaders. But Clara spoke her mind.

It seemed to her, next trip East, that scores of party leaders from other states thought she was right. They sought her out to say so. They joined her instance that the national party chairman keep out of primary contests inside states.

#### Strong Party Role

Next notable incident also involved the national committee. She had a plan for keeping California's party role strong, despite the state's support for Eisenhower last time.

She sold her plan to similarly situated states and, was all set to bring it before the committee when up popped her male California counterpart, national committeeman Paul Ziffren and, it seemed, plain stole it from her.

She's not buying the claim it was previously "in the works" and she wasn't shy about saying he had no right to the scheme. It was an open state breach not often aired before the national party group.

think for yourself. I had to do it. And I did," Clara says. And then, with the little anxious feminism she often fell into: "You think I was right, don't you?"

Mrs. Shirpsr likes to think she helped create the Democratic club movement. When she was first in office people asked her: "How do we work for the party? Nobody gives us anything to do."

She urged them to try it the League way—form a "club."

Interestingly enough, the "clubs," in the epoch of this notable woman, were what gave organizational impetus to new Democratic blood in California.

#### The Hard Part

All her life, Clara Shirpsr has given her whole enthusiasm to what captured her interest.

She's a grandmother now, and only this habit could have buoyed her up, through those horrible campaign exhaustions: the press of people, the minute multiple mistakes, the disappointments, exhilarations, bad food, no food, cold food, the midnight bus rides and 4 a.m. plane

Safe Co., is proud enough of his wife telling off the party's top brass to endure the official outings and household disruptions.

Clara interrupted her college course to get married early, and her daughter, Barbara (Mrs. Robert Deliban, of Glenview, Ill.) now mother of two sons, has had until now a daughterly disrespect for mother's addiction to politics.

#### Ran Against Caldecott

She was around through the Berkeley League of Women Voters days, before mother took seriously her own admonition, that a League member must be ready to serve her party actively. Mrs. Shirpsr ran, when asked, against one of the clearly toughest-to-take assemblymen in the state, the present GOP party chairman, Tom Caldecott. That was the first step, six years ago. Then Kefauver.

"Now I don't go into the League meetings often," she acknowledged. "I don't think they feel comfortable with me around. You know—too partisan."

Clara won't quit thinking for herself, just because she's out of office.

*Friends of Clara Shirpsr are sending you this article believing you will be interested in this recognition of her accomplishment for the Democratic Party.*

Shirpser: I think some of the things she says there helped me a great deal to accept Estes' defeat, which was the end of my political career, too, on the National Committee.

Mary Ellen recounted the salient points, such as my opposing National Chairman Steve Mitchell when he tried to purge Roosevelt and Condon. Also, she wrote of the fact that the other party leaders in California maintained a conservative cautious hush, where I spoke my mind, during that crisis.

She also spoke of my resolution for the national bonus on delegates to the convention. She says here, "Paul Ziffren, it seemed, plain stole it from her."

She wrote that I had said, "'The League teaches you to think for yourself. I had to do this and I did.' Then with a little anxious feminism she often fell into, she said, 'You think I was right, don't you?'" (I wasn't aware I did that, but it's undoubtedly so.)

Chall: Yes, she probably picked it up.

Shirpser: She also speaks of my role in starting the clubs and what this meant to the development of a real Democratic party in California.

Chall: I'm concerned with the way she heads that sentence that deals with your role in the clubs. "Mrs. Shirpser likes to think she helped create the Democratic Club movement." Does that have a meaning to it?

Shirpser: I think she means that it gives me satisfaction to know that I was the one who started organizing Democratic Clubs. I don't think she means that there was any doubt of it. You could interpret it that way, I realize that.

When I first read it I thought of that. Then, knowing Mary Ellen and knowing that she knew what I had done, I think she meant that I liked to think this was true "that I helped create the Democratic Club movement."

It isn't an easy thing to give up the National Committee post. I wasn't bitter. I made my decision to support Estes knowing that I was giving up the National Committee post if he lost the California primary. I wouldn't be human if I didn't think, "Well, suppose I hadn't done it the way I did?"



Chall: Yes, you had your opportunity.

Shirpser: Yes, to go on for another four years. You miss the contacts you made and the wonderful friends you get to know and the opportunity for accomplishment. I had the same pains that a man does in retirement from leading such an active, full life at the national and state levels, to go back to being just Clara Shirpser, housewife, clubwoman, whatever it was I would do. It would be very difficult to adjust to; I was well aware of it. I wouldn't minimize that I found it most difficult.

When Libby Smith was chosen as national committeewoman I wrote her immediately and asked her to have lunch with me, and offered to turn over anything she might want in my files, any letters or records she wanted. I hoped that I could work with her. I wanted to. After all, I must have learned something of value in my four years as national committeewoman. After our cordial lunch meeting, I didn't hear from her with any requests to take any important roles or to function on a policy committee.

There's a letter that I wrote later to Estes, reporting that so many of the Kefauver delegates were given perfunctory roles or "paper positions," with little real responsibility after the Stevenson-Kefauver campaign. There was an attempt to bring them into the party, but never in any meaningful roles.

I had so many letters from Kefauver people who had been appointed and hoped to do a good job. They wrote that they were always left out of the important meetings. Certainly my role was a very secondary one. I was rarely asked to do anything except to raise money. I was always put on the Democratic Dinner Committees to sell \$100 tickets.

Chall: Was this during the campaign or after the campaign?

Shirpser: Oh, after the campaign. But when you're no longer national committeewoman, unless you have a lot of money and continue to give large sums, you really are someplace in the background.

I've been to large Democratic dinners where Ellie Heller was introduced from the head table (Libby was seated at the head table), and I was sitting right there, too, at a dinner table, and they "neglected" to introduce me, though I, too, was the former national committeewoman as well as Ellie.





Shirpser: Friends in the audience were outraged and sent up notes to the chairman of the dinner to be sure to introduce me. But it didn't do a bit of good. I was being punished for supporting Estes. I can't tell you how many slights and snubs came my way, which hurt me deeply.

Adlai realized that I had been of value to him, even in the Kefauver campaign, as will develop later. Many of my friends were delighted with the Mary Ellen Leary article, and without saying anything to me about it, they had a reprint made. They sent out hundreds of copies of the article to California congressmen, to friends in the United States Senate. Some of the girls who had been my volunteers had access to the files, and gave them lists to send to all the National Committee members, and some governors that I knew.

Chall: You got some good responses from them.

Shirpser: I got some wonderful letters. Unfortunately, I didn't keep most of them. But this wire from Estes, I especially like. "Someone just sent me an article from San Francisco News, so warm in praise of you. I endorse it heartily. Don't you worry Clara, you will be right in there. We will rise again." [Emphasis added] This meant a great deal to me, of course.

#### Kefauver Withdraws in Favor of Stevenson

Shirpser: The next thing chronologically is a wire I got from Estes dated July 25, 1956, in which he said he would deeply appreciate my coming to Washington, D.C. for a buffet supper at six o'clock, Sunday, July 29, at the Mayflower Hotel, and for an important conference Monday, July 30. "Your opinion and advice will be of inestimable value. Kindest regards, please reply."

I knew what this would be, and, of course, I wanted to be there. This is probably one of the most dramatic chapters of my whole political career.

Well, right after I got back there I heard from both Howard McGrath and from Jiggs Donohue, with whom I had been national co-chairman for the campaign. Each of them talked to me separately and asked me what I thought Estes ought to do.



Shirpser: I said that I thought he ought to withdraw. I felt he couldn't go on this way. He hadn't a chance. The best he could do would be to deadlock the convention, and that's not a role congenial to him.

Each said, "Well, in whose favor do you think he should withdraw?" I said, "Adlai Stevenson." You remember that I told you that in Denver a couple of weeks before the primaries finished that I had discussed this in complete secrecy with Bill Blair.

So, each of them asked me to use my influence with Estes. I said, "Well, your own influence is certainly great..." They said, "You don't realize how much Estes depends on you; your influence is much greater than you realize. You should talk to him alone and explain the reasons, as we've just done."

I said, "You know, you're putting a tremendous responsibility on me." They said, "He trusts you completely." I said, "I don't want to have that much decision-making power. I really don't want it."

They thought the three of us, all sharing the same policy decision, would have great weight with Estes' decision.

Chall: All this time he was still uncertain about his move?

Shirpser: He had not made up his mind what to do. You see, he had approximately two hundred convention delegates committed to him. It took six hundred to win. He wanted to be fair to his delegates, too.

If he stayed in and neither Stevenson nor Harriman could get the nomination, he might emerge the winner. You never know what's going to happen in a convention. If you are in there and you're battling, you have a chance of making it.

So, we all had dinner together and talked in a general way. The next morning Estes had told us he wanted us to meet without him, as his friends and supporters from all over the United States. "Talk frankly, express your opinions, see what you can do to reach a consensus and let me know what you think."

Well, we did talk all morning, and he came back to have lunch with us.

Chall: How many people were participating?



Shirpser: I think about twenty-five. I think from California, Tom Carrell and Joe de Silva and I were the only ones. At least, that's all I remember. This was so long ago.

Chall: A small group.

Shirpser: We all talked very frankly. Then Estes came to have lunch with us. We were going to go into session again that afternoon, without him.

I believe that night we were all to have dinner with him and we would then tell him what we thought. There might have to be a majority report and a minority report.

During lunch a bellboy came in and called, "Mrs. Clara Shirpser." I said, "What is it? I can't leave unless it's really important." He said, "Yes, there's an important long-distance call." So, naturally I went out and took it.

I can't say who called me because I've been asked not to, but it was someone very close to Averell Harriman, who was governor of New York at that time. He was a good friend and so was the friend who called me. I was told that it was known that we Kefauver people were meeting and the purpose of our meeting, and that they knew that Estes had a large campaign deficit and that he would be working for years and years to clear it up if he had to do it on his own; that if Estes were interested in the vice-president's role, Governor Harriman would approve of him if Governor Harriman won the nomination; that Governor Harriman would be delighted to take over Estes' campaign debt. I was asked to relay this message to Estes and not to let anyone else know.

Well, again, this was an awfully big responsibility to hand me. I refused to tell my friend who was phoning what I thought. I said, "We're in a midst of a meeting. It wouldn't be right to give you any indication of what my thinking is, or what the group's thinking is. I will certainly see that Estes hears this--in a private meeting with him." I was urged to promote this Harriman plan for Estes' own sake. It certainly was a very tempting offer.

As soon as I came back to lunch, where I was sitting next to Estes, he asked me what that was all about. I said, "I have to talk to you privately." Before the afternoon meeting started he managed to meet me alone. I told him about the call from Harriman's supporters. He looked at me, and I could see that he



Shirpsen: was very much disturbed, and he said, "What do you think I ought to do, Clara?"

I said, "Estes, everybody here has given me so much more responsibility in trying to influence you in making your decision than I want or should have." He said, "I'm asking you because I trust you completely and want to know what you think."

I said, "Well, if I were thinking of you just as a friend, I would say take it because I know how hard it will be and how many years it's going to take you to erase this campaign debt. I also know that when you've lost so much after two national campaigns where you worked so terribly hard, maybe the vice-presidency would be a good thing for you. I'm sure Harriman would give you real responsibilities. He's an older man. You would probably be carrying a much larger responsibility than most vice-presidents have. So, if I were thinking of you just as my friend, I would say grab it."

He said, "But what are you really thinking?" I said, "Well, I'm thinking of what you have said to me over and over again: That if a man wants to be president he should go to the people and he has to battle through the primary elections. He's got to meet the people. He's got to tell them what he thinks. He should be very greatly influenced by what happens in the primaries. That a man who sits back and waits for two candidates to "kill" each other in the primaries and then grabs the bonus of the convention nomination--you've always said that is not what you believe in."

He said, "Well, you remember '52 when I won eleven out of fourteen primaries and I didn't win the nomination of the Democratic convention." I said, "I know. I know how much you resent that, and I know how much I resent that, and everybody else who was for you, resented it. But I do think the '56 convention will be a much more open and fair one. If you do decide to withdraw I hope you will do it in favor of Adlai. He was your opponent in the primaries, and he did win the last two important primaries of Florida and California."

"I know California wants him. I was very depressed by the size of his majority over you. Estes, you've been a man of such integrity all through the years, so sincere, it seems to me your role must inevitably be that you withdraw in Adlai's favor. I don't want to say any of this, but you're asking me what I think,





Shirpser: and I've always tried to be truthful with you."

He said, "This is why what you're saying to me means so much to me." So, he said, "Tell them what you think at the meeting this afternoon. Don't hesitate. Howard and Jiggs think as you do. I'm obviously greatly influenced by what you three are thinking. Though it is a temptation, the Harriman offer, I don't see how I can take it and be consistent with the principles which I've lived by."

So, again my admiration for Estes' courage, integrity, and unselfishness was unbounded. I've never known anyone like him in politics, ever. I left him and went back into the session where we discussed and argued. There was some strong opposition to his withdrawing in favor of Adlai.

Many of his most ardent supporters thought he ought to make a deal if he did withdraw. Others thought he ought to stay in. Somebody asked me if I knew facts I was withholding from them. "Has anyone approached him?" And I said, "Yes, Governor Harriman has. I cannot give you any details. I promised I wouldn't."

"Well, if Harriman is offering him something and Stevenson hasn't even bothered to call him, why doesn't he go with Harriman?" I explained the reasons which I thought were valid. Several people there said to me, "You're not practical enough. You're too idealistic."

We finally voted, and it was overwhelmingly in favor of withdrawing in favor of Stevenson. Adlai had not called, had not offered anything. So, that's why I think it should be known how great Estes was in deciding later that it was best for the country if he withdrew in favor of Stevenson, though Estes liked Harriman, and they had a very good relationship.

Estes and Adlai had made some very bitter charges against each other at the end of the California campaign, which were still rankling. So, in view of all this, I really think it took a great man like Estes to make this decision.

I didn't know what Estes was going to finally decide. He didn't tell us at the dinner meeting. He said, "You've all expressed yourselves." We wrote, too, in a report, what we thought and how we felt. Estes told us, "I want to go away now and I want to digest this report, and I want to make my own decision as I always have." This was, of course, what we wanted him to do.



Shirpsen: The next morning he called me and I thought he was going to tell me his decision. He said, "No, I want you to come to my office at two o'clock this afternoon, and then we'll discuss it." I said, "I can't wait!" He said, "Well, you're going to have to! I really don't have time now. We'll talk fully at two o'clock."

I'm so glad he didn't tell me then in view of what happened later. Ruth Finney, Bob Allen's wife, asked me to have lunch with her, which was unfortunate timing in view of what happened later. We talked about many political and personal things. Then she said, "What is Estes going to do? I know why you're all here in Washington." I said, "I give you my word of honor, I don't know what Estes has decided to do. I will know this afternoon. We talked and we stated our opposing points of view, and we've all expressed them to him. And Estes is making his own decision, as he always does."

"What do you think he'll do?" I said, "You know I couldn't tell you that, Ruth. I don't know what he's going to do. Only he knows what he's going to do. I'm going to see him at two o'clock this afternoon."

She said, "I respect the reasons why you can't, and I know if you could, you would tell me. It would be a great scoop." I said, "No, of course, I can't tell you, and I don't know. Estes has not yet told me."

After lunch, I went to the Senate Office Building where Estes' office was, and I ran into Senator Wayne Morse in the hall. Wayne was a very good friend of Estes and I'd gotten to know him well. So, we were chatting, and I saw Estes walk out of his office with Dick Wallace.

I said, "Hey! Wayne, yell to him! I'm supposed to be in his office and I'm late." So, there went Estes with that long stride of his. If I ran as fast as I could, I wouldn't be able to go as fast as he was walking.

So, Wayne made a cup of his hands and yelled all the way down the hall in the Senate Office Building. "Wait, Estes! Clara's here!" So, they waited and Estes said, "Clara, you're late! And on a day like this!"



## Clara Makes an Historic Phone Call to Stevenson

Shirpser: I said, "What's special about today?" He said, "I'm on my way to the Willard Hotel where I threw my hat in the ring and I'm going to withdraw in favor of Adlai at a press conference I just called." I looked at his face, and if you ever saw a man suffering, and in agony, it was Estes. Really, you just can't know how hard he had worked and what he had put into this campaign. Now he was going back to the very hotel at which he announced his candidacy.

I couldn't say anything. I was too choked up to say anything, except I nodded at him. I managed to get out, "I think you're doing the right thing."

In the car driving to the Willard Hotel Dick Wallace kept throwing questions at Estes.

Chall: Who was Dick Wallace?

Shirpser: Dick Wallace was his administrative assistant. He's now the director of the Atlantic Union, the one that supports NATO and Federal Union. We were very good friends. He sat there asking typical questions of Estes that might be asked at the press conference.

Estes answered slowly and sadly. This kept affecting me so much.

Chall: Excuse me, was he throwing questions as if he were interviewing for the press?

Shirpser: Yes. That's right. The typical kind of questions that would be asked. He wanted Estes to be thinking ahead to the type of questions that might come to him, which was a very good tactic.

When we got to the Willard Hotel Estes said to me, "Clara, Jiggs, and Howard McGrath, and you are going to sit at the head table with me, and you're going to smile." I said, "Estes, I can't do it. I'm going to break down. I just don't think I can do it."

He said more sternly to me that at any other time since I'd known him, "Clara, if I can do it, you can do it. I'm depending on you. You will sit there and you will smile."



Shirpser: And I did. Here's a press picture of the four of us, grinning. [Looks at picture] I was laughing and I felt like sobbing. But this is what I had to do. You've got to be a good sport. The press asked me questions too, and I dealt with them as well as I could. I spoke of my admiration for Estes and the difficulty of his decision, and how he always put the best interests of his country and his party ahead of his own.

Anyway, we got through it. Estes said, "Come back to the office with me now. I have something I want you to do." So, we went back to his office.

Chall: You hadn't had a chance to cry yet?

Shirpser: No. And I did later, believe me. Estes said to me, "Here is Adlai Stevenson's Chicago office number. I want you to phone right away and tell him I've withdrawn in his favor."

I said, "Estes, why me! You must take the credit for it! It's your opportunity. You'll get goodwill and appreciation from Adlai. You, not I, should be making that historic call. Why are you asking me to do it?"

So, he said something to me I've never forgotten, "Clara, you have never told me so, but I have known how you suffered through this whole campaign. You have been such a good sport. You've worked so hard. You've tried to shield me from that knowledge. I want you to have the pleasure of telling Adlai yourself."

I thought, "Estes really is a great man." In the midst of his agony, of his terrible letdown and disappointment, he was capable of thinking of me at a time like this and how much it would mean to me to make this call, to have this active leading participation in a truly historic event. This was one of the greatest rewards that has ever come to me that Estes could think of this. Estes kissed me and hugged me and he said, "You do it, now."

So, I called the office, and Adlai wasn't in, and I talked to Bill Blair. I said, "I've got good news, Bill." He said, "Is it what I think it is?" I said, "Now, I'm only going to tell Adlai." He said, "Wait a minute! He's at Libertyville, I'll patch in the call. I have a way of doing it. You can talk to him at Libertyville" (which was Adlai's home).





Shirpser:       Adlai came on the phone and I said, "Adlai, Estes asked me to call you. I have wonderful news. Estes just had a press conference and he withdrew in your favor." Adlai answered: "Welcome home, Clara." At that point I did start to cry. It was just too much emotion for one day.

I said, "I'm so happy to give you this great news, but I can't talk anymore, Adlai. Here's Estes." Adlai said, "Oh, I want to talk to him." And they had a long conversation. Of course, Adlai was truly grateful to Estes.

You realize the importance of this withdrawal, don't you? Because Estes had two hundred votes and Adlai had approximately four hundred. Adlai needed six hundred. So, if we could deliver those two hundred votes to Adlai, his nomination was assured. How hard Estes worked to get his delegates to vote for Adlai at the convention, we'll discuss later.

Without it, there could have been a bitter battle at the convention that could have lasted for days. It could have divided the Democratic party. But Estes' withdrawal in Adlai's favor made it almost certain that Adlai would get the nomination on the first ballot.

Later Adlai called me and told me he wanted me to come on his California delegation now, which I was delighted to do, of course. He talked to Pat Brown, but unfortunately, I could come on only as an alternate. Adlai knew how many friends I had on the delegation, he also thought it would help Estes and me to get our delegates from other states to go for Adlai.

I became an alternate delegate at the convention. It was the second time! "Always a bridesmaid, never a bride," you know. [Laughs] But this was better for me to be an alternate than not to be on the delegation. Because while I was still national committeewoman--we're going to go into Butler and the tickets next--naturally it was much more important and effective if I were a member of the delegation, even if I were only an alternate.

I was really happy after Adlai said, "Welcome home, Clara." Then, while I was sitting there talking to Estes in his office that same afternoon, taking some of the phone calls which kept pouring in, Charlie Allredge, who was Estes' national press director, came storming into the office, waving a newspaper.



Shirpsen: He said to me, "Clara, I didn't think you could be so disloyal to Estes! I didn't think you'd try to get prestige and credit for yourself at Estes' expense! You've ruined my press release!"

I said, "What are you talking about? Why don't you tell me what I've done before you start calling me names?" So, he handed me a Washington newspaper and on the front page was the headline, "Clara Shirpsen announces Kefauver withdrawal in favor of Stevenson." I was stunned. I said that I was not responsible for that article.

Later, I did my utmost to try to trace the source of the article. The only thing I can think of is that someone in the press who liked me and who realized that I had sacrificed my career and that I had been loyal to Estes, at great cost to myself, tried to get me some credit as I was going out of office, trying to show that I still had some national importance.

I never knew who it was. And Charlie was practically foaming at the mouth! I said to him, "How can you think of me as being treacherous to Estes? You, who know me so well? How could you think I'd even think of such a thing, let alone do it? I didn't know what Estes had decided to do, so how could I tell? Estes, you tell him! He won't listen to me."

Estes said, "Clara did not know what I was going to do until after lunch when she came to my office at 2 p.m. Charlie immediately said, 'Who did you see this morning?'" I said, "I had lunch with Ruth Finney." Charlie said, "Ahh. That's how it got into the newspaper."

It went out under United Press byline. It was nationwide, you see. It may have been the Washington Daily News or the Washington Post. Anyway, it was a Washington paper.

I hadn't done it. I said, "Estes, tell him that I didn't know your decision until two o'clock this afternoon and I've been with you ever since." So, Estes spoke to Charlie very sternly and said, "This isn't fair and I won't have any more of it. You apologize to Clara."

Charlie said, "I don't believe her. If the UP has it, she did it." So, I said, "Don't you ever speak to me again as long as you live. How you could believe that I would do such a thing, even after I have denied it. You obviously don't know me and I



Shirpser: don't want to know you anymore if this is what you're capable of."

So, here I was, left with this terrible accusation that I'd been treacherous. Estes kept reassuring me that he truly believed me. But I went back to my hotel room and I really broke down. This was more than I could bear. It was so unfair.

When you've done something wrong and somebody calls you down it's one thing, but when you haven't, it's hard to take--so unjustified. Charlie later wrote me a letter of apology, which I did not answer. He sent me a beautiful letter at Christmas time which I didn't answer either.

I felt that if he could be so completely ruthless and hateful to me, I didn't want to know him anymore. He's dead now, and sometimes I've been sorry I didn't accept his apology.

Chall: The press can certainly do some harsh things to people, both wittingly and unwittingly, it seems.

Shirpser: I feel that article must have been written by a friend who was a reporter to create goodwill for me. Somebody evidently was trying to salvage something out of all of this for me, and felt this would give me some national prestige. It went all over the country.

Before we go into the convention, itself, I have to read you one letter which is probably the most beautiful letter I've ever received about my role as national committeewoman. The reason I'm doing it is because Dave Barton, a dear friend who represents publishers of scientific magazines and who was a journalist, read some of my material when he was here, and said, "You're always too modest." Well, I don't think I've been modest at all in these interviews, but I value David's judgment and experience.

I showed him this letter from Peter Odegard and he said, "It has to be part of the record." Peter was formerly president of Reed College in Oregon, and was the executive assistant to Morgenthau, who was secretary of the treasury in Washington, D.C. Peter had several roles in the Roosevelt campaign and administration. He not only had the academic background as chairman of the political science department at the University of California at that time, but he also had a great deal of experience in practical politics.



Shirpser: He was a wonderful friend to me all through my term as national committeewoman. He lived only two blocks away. He has since died, which was a great sorrow. Eleanor, his wife, is still a very close friend.

Chall: I notice that he has written this letter to you by hand.

Shirpser: Yes, he's written it by hand, which makes it so personal. This is written August 10, 1956. Quote: "I cannot leave for the Democratic convention tomorrow without first writing you to say what a really magnificent job you have done as national committeewoman for California.

"You have set a standard truly to which the wise and good may aspire. Watching from the sidelines I've been inspired by your indefatigable efforts to represent on the National Committee those principles of Democratic public service that are unfortunately more often proclaimed than performed.

"In you, the practice of politics has been imbued with the highest standards of public service. You have wisely, courageously, and consistently served not only the best interests of the Democratic party, but also the best interests of our country.

"For this we owe you an irreparable debt. Libby Smith is going to have to work very hard to try to fill your shoes. I know, too, how much your own superb service has been made possible by the patience and gentle spirit of Ad. Surely there is somewhere some suitable reward for him. But, then who could even think to compensate or thank anyone for such selfless devotion to the public good."

He signed it with "My respect and affection, as always, Peter." Isn't that a beautiful letter? I can't tell you what a comfort it was. When I was sad, I went back and read it over and over again. When slights, and snubs, and criticisms hit me at the convention, I could remember that a man who really knew me and who really knew what politics and public service mean could write of me in those terms.





### Preparations for the Convention

Shirpser: Should we go into the convention ticket situation now?

Chall: We might as well. We have about ten or fifteen minutes left today.

Shirpser: You are national committeewoman until the convention has ended. On February 14, I received a letter which was a reply to a man who had asked for guest tickets to the Democratic National Convention. This was February 14, 1956.

It was from Neal Roach, who was arrangements chairman for the convention in 1956, and he was the executive assistant to Matt McCloskey, national treasurer. He wrote to this California man who requested tickets. "Just as in the past any guest tickets to the Democratic National Convention will be allocated through the National Committee members in the various states. [Emphasis added] I would suggest you get in touch with one of the following members, if it is possible I know they will be glad to help you." And he gave my name as Democratic National Committeewoman for California and Paul Ziffren as National Committeeman.

I had many many requests for convention tickets by then, so I wrote a typical letter in reply and sent a copy to Neal Roach. He wrote back later and said it was an excellent letter and covered the situation. It explained that tickets were very hard to get this year because under the new procedures the delegation was doubled with half votes for each delegate.

The alternates couldn't even sit on the convention floor. They were going to have to sit in the gallery. That naturally reduced the number of gallery seats. Gallery seats must go first to Democratic party officials, congressmen, legislators and so on. But I promised to do my best, and I hoped that we would do as in the last convention--that if anybody wasn't going to a session of the convention turned in their tickets to a committee, then that committee, each day, would have some tickets to give out. But that's all I could promise.

Then I got a letter from Leonard Reinsch, who was the assistant to Paul Butler. He, again, was someone I knew well and had worked with. This is dated June 26. "Within the next few days Chairman Butler will send a letter to all members of



Shirpser: the National Committee explaining ticket distribution, badge distribution, and so forth." And he explained the problems with an insufficient number of tickets.

He, too, praised my excellent reply to inquiries and wrote that there will be 1,855 fewer gallery seats to distribute. He thanked me and wrote that he will be looking forward to seeing me in Chicago.

Then I got a letter, July 14, from the man I supported for National Committee chairman, Mr. Paul Butler. "I'm pleased to advise you that you will receive two tickets instead of one for reserved seats for the Democratic National Convention. You will be advised at a later date where to pick them up, with your badge as national committeewoman. You will be given floor privileges, but without any assurance of a floor seat being available.

"In answer to your inquiry about your husband we have no special badges for National Committee members and their spouses. (In '52 every husband or wife of National Committee members got a badge.) The chairman of the California delegation, Attorney General Pat Brown, will be responsible for the delegates' tickets and for any appointments for your state." [Emphasis added]

I have a letter from Clair Engle asking if his nephew could get an appointment as a page. I received many letters from other people, even congressmen, who asked me if I could help them get a badge. This is the way it had always been done in the history of Democratic conventions--to have the tickets and badges allocated by National Committee members in each state.

The last sentence of my chairman's letter says, "Your state allotment of tickets, credentials, and badges will be delivered to Attorney General Pat Brown." [Emphasis added] This was insulting me, bypassing me, taking from me the prerogatives of my office!

I wrote him a strong letter, told him what was in the Democratic manual. I told him what the previous procedures state; wrote that I had just come from visiting National Committee members from the states of Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, and Oregon, and these were states where Estes had delegates, and the National Committee members were receiving the badges and passes for their delegations.



Shirpser: I protested Butler's humiliation of me. I told him what James Roosevelt had done in 1952 when someone then tried to take the convention tickets away from me. Jimmy read from the Democratic manual saying that "it is the responsibility of the members of the National Committee from each state to allocate the tickets."

I went on quoting what Neal Roach had said, what Leonard Reinsch had said, and I protested strongly. Also I was sarcastic, saying that "I'm pleased to know that you are giving me floor privileges, which obviously you are not giving me, but which I will have because I'm entitled to floor privileges. I assume that a member of the California delegation will see that I sit with them whenever I come on the floor." They did, too. They were just great.

Anytime I came to the delegation, somebody would either point to an empty seat or jump up and give me their seat. Butler's action was one of the most insulting things that has even been done to a national committeewoman. Again, this was punishment because I supported Kefauver, in my opinion.

That's the only way I can say it because you know how often Paul Butler told me and wrote to me about what a valuable job I'd done as national committeewoman.

Chall: Yes, but also I know how often he undercut you.

Shirpser: Yes, right.

Chall: He never did give you the tickets?

Shirpser: He gave me the following: I said that I expected to have the two box tickets to which I was entitled, and the car and the driver, or I would protest at the National Committee meeting prior to the convention. They were then sent to me rather quickly.

After all, I was entitled to these prerogatives. You know, the chairman is supposed to be the servant of the committee, not the boss of it, which he should have known, having been a member of the National Committee before he was elected chairman.

Here's Senator Clair Engle's letter expressing some resentment of the fact that I was not being given the prerogatives to which I was entitled as Democratic National Committeewoman for California.



Shirpser:       The Los Angeles Times did a good story on the women delegates. They had an interview with Marjorie Benedict who was California National Committeewoman for the Republican party, and with me as Democratic National Committeewoman for California.





XII THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION, 1956  
(Interview 15, June 19, 1973)

Some Preliminary Maneuvering

Chall: I think we left off the last time with your having difficulty getting tickets for the convention. Ultimately you got on the floor with the privileges of your office.

Shirpser: If you wear a National Committee badge you go any place in the convention. So Paul Butler wasn't giving me any floor privileges. I was entitled to them. As far as having a seat with the delegation there were so many friends who welcomed me back so warmly there was no problem at all anytime I came on the floor. And I usually did, after I gathered some information in my box. That is a most important place to be, because in the corridors back of the boxes, you go out and have a Coke or coffee; people are coming and going. You are talking to other National Committee members, one, or two, or three at a time, as the people sitting in your box come and go. So I could pick up bits and pieces of information.

Then I would go to the floor and usually relay them to Pat Brown, who was the chairman, or to some of the other delegates whom I knew well, and who would find my latest information to be useful. There was never a time when three or four delegates didn't jump up and offer me their seats. Usually there was a vacancy because people come and go. They get restless after sitting hour after hour.

I decided not to make a big fuss over it. I talked it over with Estes and he thought that was better. It was very insulting to me to take from me the prerogatives of my office because I didn't stop being national committeewoman until the convention was adjourned.



Shirpsr: Incidentally, the first caucus I went to of the California delegation I sat down in the audience. I told you Adlai had asked me to join the California delegation and called Pat Brown to that effect, who then called me. They both realized that having so closely associated with Estes Kefauver it would be valuable for Adlai to have me on the California delegation. So I could go then and say to the delegates, "I'm a member of the California delegation now. I'm helping Adlai. This is what Estes wants you to do."

But the first time I came to a meeting I was sitting with some friends in the delegation and then Pat Brown, Libby Smith, and Paul Ziffren sat down at the head table. Pat introduced the people at the head table. He introduced Libby as California's Democratic National Committeewoman. This was pretty bad, because Pat knew better. It surprised me because we had been good friends and had been working together very congenially. I didn't say anything, but friends all over the floor jumped up and said, "Clara Shirpsr is our Democratic National Committeewoman until this convention ends. Perhaps you aren't familiar with the convention rules as chairman of this delegation, Mr. Brown."

So he apologized and I got to my feet and said that I would like to say a few words to the delegation. I spoke quietly but, they tell me, effectively. I explained to them that I had been part of the small group that had met with Estes Kefauver before he made his decision to withdraw, and that I had used all my influence with him, which was considerable, to urge him to withdraw in Adlai's favor, and the reasons why--because of the primary route they both had taken--and that Estes had asked me to call Adlai and give him the news myself which had been a very historic and wonderful thing for Estes to do for me.

I told them that Adlai had said, "Welcome home, Clara." So that was the way Adlai felt about me, and he had asked me to join the delegation and had phoned Pat Brown to that effect. I said, "I am working around the clock, as is Estes Kefauver, to try and deliver our two hundred delegates to Adlai Stevenson. If we succeed, we will obviously win the first ballot." I also spoke of my admiration for Adlai Stevenson.

Three of the most experienced political leaders in the country were certainly President Truman, India Edwards, and Averell Harriman. Yet, shortly before the convention started, Mr. Truman came out with an endorsement of Averell Harriman and said he wanted him to be the presidential nominee, and India



Shirpsen: Edwards made the same endorsement. That made our job more difficult, because many of our delegates liked Averell Harriman, and many of them liked Harry Truman. This made it more hazardous for Adlai to win. The former president of the United States has a great deal of influence in a Democratic convention.

Chall: Are you in the dark about why Harry Truman backed Harriman at this stage?

Shirpsen: I think he thought his influence was still so great, remembering what he had done in '52. Sam Rayburn was again chairman and he was very much influenced by what Harry Truman thought. There have been rumors that he thought Adlai too indecisive, that he couldn't make up his mind. Mr. Truman thought that we needed someone with more experience in the national scene than Adlai had. It was a blow to Adlai, obviously, and it was one that might have caused some problems. It was too late to have much effect.

When Estes went from caucus to caucus, he often took me with him, and this was very valuable later on the floor during the vice-presidential fight because I had gotten to know these delegates in various areas. They had seen me come with Estes to their delegates' meetings. Adlai took me with him a couple of times to show the close alliance we had. Once I went with Eleanor Roosevelt, which was a wonderful experience for me, too. She went with Estes several times to caucuses to speak for Adlai. To my mind, she was the greatest person there, and the most effective, so that her support of Adlai was always a great help.

In doing some of this research I came across a letter from Brad Eben. Brad was vice-chairman of Estes' campaign committee when he was running for president. He was from Chicago, very prominent, a younger man, attractive and very genial, outgoing, extremely intelligent.

Estes told me he had asked Brad to be sure that I got reservations to the Blackstone Hotel, because that was where he was going to be, and that was V.I.P. headquarters. Most of the "Who's Who" stayed in The Blackstone. So he wanted me to be there near him so I could participate. The difficulty of getting around a city the size of Chicago during the convention is enormous. So to be in the same place is extremely important, especially as Estes wanted me to continue to have a leading role in whatever he decided to do.



Shirpser: I got this letter from Brad dated July 19. I think I had written back and said, "Why don't you let me know where I'm going to be?" So he said, "Dear Clara, It's only an illusion that you're out of my mind. You are not, and I still love you. The fact is, however, I have not been able to write you about your room prior to now because we could get no action from the Democratic National Committee." This is what happened to Kefauver people all the time, even after Estes came out for Adlai.

Brad continued: "Howard McGrath, Ed Pauley and your good self are out in left field. However I can get you a double bedroom at The Blackstone (because Ad was with me). I do have available a one-bedroom suite at the Conrad Hilton." I wanted to be in the same hotel as Estes. I didn't care to have the expense of a suite. I said I could always go to Estes' suite. George Killion had a suite at The Blackstone, and so did Silliman Evans. By that time anyway we were so used to going in and out of one another's bedrooms to caucus it never made any difference, and Ad was with me.

Silliman Evans, Jr. had an adjoining suite to Estes. He had a very important role in this convention, as you will see later. He was the publisher of the Nashville Tennessean. He was a young man in his thirties. His father, Silliman Evans, Sr. had been one of the leading forces in Estes Kefauver's campaign when he first ran for Congress. He knew Estes, he admired his qualifications for high political office, and his newspapers always supported him in any endeavor he undertook. When he died, he left the newspaper to his son, Silliman Evans, Jr. with the express provision that any time Estes Kefauver ever ran for any political office, the Nashville Tennessean and all its newspapers all over Tennessee would support Estes Kefauver in every possible way. So this was the legacy with which Silliman Evans, Jr. came to his first convention as publisher of the Nashville Tennessean. So he sat in on all the policy and strategy meetings. I got to know him quite well, which stood me in good stead later.

I think I told you how hard Estes worked at the convention to persuade his delegates to vote for Adlai. He met with Adlai first, and the two of them went over every Kefauver delegate in every state where there was any doubt. Estes went from caucus to caucus. He also talked to individual delegates separately when there was any doubt. I don't think that a defeated candidate ever worked so hard in history as Estes worked at that convention. Sometimes he asked me to speak to women delegates. Since I had





Shirpser: resolved myself to complete support of Adlai I was a good example that they should do likewise.

Chall: Did he meet with any opposition?

Shirpser: Oh yes, many delegates wanted to support Averell Harriman, especially after Mr. Truman came out for him. So it was a real task to convince them. I would guess that 85-90 percent of them did eventually vote on the first ballot for Stevenson, which guaranteed his victory. Tom Carrell worked very hard, too. He had been state campaign chairman in California. We sometimes went together, but we didn't want to cover the same territory any oftener than we could help.

There were fun things too; it wasn't all hard work. I think I've told you about Pearl Mesta's party, which really was the ultimate in every detail. Again being so close to Estes was wonderful, because he and Nancy took me to the Mesta party. That meant I sat at a table with a lot of other well-known people because I was with Estes.

Chall: Was her party a general party for delegates or for special people?

Shirpser: Only for special people, the people she wanted to have there. To get to a Pearl Mesta party was considered a real achievement. I had never been to one previously. She always gave a party at every convention.

She had the most beautiful linen, china, silver, and crystal glasses. One thing that impressed me so much were the champagne glasses. Each one had pink ribbon wound around the stem and a fresh, pink rosebud fastened into the ribbon. Can you imagine the man-or-woman hours that went into those hundreds of glasses, all being wound by hand with pink ribbon, a bow and a pink rosebud? There were magnificent food and wines. Probably nobody before or since has ever given parties like Pearl Mesta. Every detail was beautiful--live music, string orchestra. It was really beautiful.

Chall: How many people?

Shirpser: It was a big crowd. I think it was held in a ballroom. There must have been more than two hundred people. In terms of the thousands at the convention this wasn't very big. Once in awhile "bonuses" like that came my way.



Shirpser: I haven't spoken of Nancy Kefauver as much as I should. In the second campaign she did not come on the campaign trail very much. In the first place, her children were older and they needed her; and in the second place, I think she was tired of campaigning, and I'm not sure that she wanted Estes to run again. But the last week of the campaign she really did come with us, which was a great help. She was attractive, friendly to everyone, she could speak well when called upon. I don't think she ever made speeches but she was very articulate when she did speak.

We had a wonderful relationship. I always saw her when I was in Washington. She wrote me a perfectly beautiful letter, which I came across the other day, speaking of my sacrifices and the time I devoted to Estes' campaigns, and she didn't see how I survived it. She said that she will never cease to appreciate all I did for him and for her family. I always enjoyed a lovely relationship with her.

There was a California reception just before the convention began. I went to that, and of course it was a "returning home" party for me, because I saw people from all over California that I hadn't seen since the primary campaign started.

Chall: Where was this reception?

Shirpser: In one of the hotels. Delegates from all over the country were invited and of course they were for Stevenson. As I went through the receiving line I was kissed and hugged by most of the California and national officials in the line. It made me feel good. I had been sort of a loner all through the Kefauver primary campaign as far as these friends were concerned. It was good to be welcomed back so cordially.

As I got opposite Mrs. Ives, Adlai's sister, who was in the receiving line, and who was, as I previously told you, very much of a grande dame and rather blunt, she said, "Well, you finally decided to support my brother, didn't you?" So Adlai jumped into the breach immediately, and told her that even when I had been for Kefauver I had kept the campaign from getting out of hand many a time, and that I had been one of the people who had exerted much influence with Estes to withdraw to his favor. I was now a member of the delegation, at Adlai's request. He said, "I said to Clara over the phone when she called me to give me this wonderful news, 'Welcome home, Clara,' and I say it again." So Mrs. Ives subsided. I was shocked and upset when she



Shirpser: said that because I didn't think I deserved it at her hands, and many people heard her, but they also heard Adlai's cordial welcome to me. I tried to understand her feelings, and to forget that unpleasant incident. I was glad that Adlai jumped to my defense. It was a good reception, and I enjoyed being back with the California group of friends.

Chall: It was a large group this time too, wasn't it? Because they had half votes.

Stevenson Nominated: the Skirmish for Vice-President

Shirpser: Yes. When the voting and the roll call started at the convention, there was never any doubt, the bandwagon started rolling as one state after another came out for Adlai. Everybody wants to be recorded, so he won very early. I think the vote was something like 905 - 210. There was no doubt about his winning. That included two hundred votes of Estes' delegates. If they had gone the other way, it could have been nip and tuck.

After Adlai had won, I went to his suite immediately to congratulate him. I asked to have a meeting with him, and said it was urgent, and I hoped that I could see him right away. It was arranged, and Adlai and Bill Blair spent almost a half hour with me, and I spent most of my time urging Adlai to offer Estes the vice-presidency.

Estes didn't even know I was doing this; I did it on my own. I didn't even know at that time that Estes would want the vice-presidential nomination. But I felt he deserved it for every good reason. I tried to be as convincing as I could.

In the first place, I said that I thought he would add more strength to the ticket than any other Democrat. After all, he had campaigned twice nationally for president. Even in some of the states where he lost, it was usually by a small margin. He was certainly the best-known Democrat in the country next to Adlai. I thought that he and Adlai agreed on almost all important issues. I also felt that since Estes came from the South, it would help bring a balance to the ticket. Southerners are usually loyal to each other when there is a national campaign. I thought that Estes deserved it because he had made Adlai's nomination absolutely certain, where if he had not withdrawn in Adlai's favor,



Shirpser: he might have deadlocked the convention, and then it might well have been that Harriman would muster enough votes to win the nomination. I told Adlai of the offer to Estes with all its advantages for him from the Harriman campaign. I urged Adlai; I just begged him to do this for Estes, for every good reason.

Then Adlai told me of the pressures that were being exerted on him by Lyndon Johnson, by Hubert Humphrey, by Jack Kennedy; I think Robert Wagner of New York was in the race for vice-president, too.

Chall: For themselves?

Shirpser: Yes. And Governor Clement of Tennessee was rumored to want it, and Senator Albert Gore. At that point, I'm not sure that Gore was an announced candidate, but at least there was a rumor to that effect.

There was a strange situation in Tennessee. In the southern states the governor usually controls the delegation and Governor Clement had ambitions of his own. He and Estes had never been friends. They always had represented different points of view. Clement was reactionary; Estes was a liberal. They worked in such different ways--Estes in the open, Clement maneuvering behind the scenes.

Clement made that keynote address at the convention and it was one of the worst speeches that I had ever heard. It was like an evangelistic speech. It was full of arm-waving and quotations from the Bible. It went on and on. That removed him from any consideration as vice-president, I'm sure, because most delegates could not have subjected themselves to an entire campaign of that kind of oratory, let alone what his ideas proved themselves to be.

Adlai said he was under terrible pressure. He really hadn't made up his mind what to do. He understood what I was saying and why I said it. He agreed with me in many ways, but he wasn't sure what his course should be.

So I left there very frustrated and rather resentful, too, because it seemed to me that Estes deserved this offer of the vice-presidency from Adlai. It was the only time that I felt that Adlai let me down in terms of not being willing to stand up and say, "Yes, this is the man who has the most strength throughout our nation. This is the man who is a fighting liberal and highly qualified to be vice-president. This is the man





Shirpser: who has made my nomination possible and worked so hard to bring it about." I explained all that Estes had done for him at the convention. He said he was well aware of it.

Chall: So you weren't too surprised when--

Shirpser: I didn't know what was going to happen, but I did go back and tell Estes that I had been to a conference with Adlai, and what had happened. He was disappointed, and resentful, too.

Chall: He was expecting that he might--

Shirpser: I don't think he really knew what he wanted to do. But that night Adlai called the convention together; he asked all the delegates to be there, and he announced that he was discarding all previous precedents and that he was not going to choose the vice-president. There were so many good people who wanted it. He was going to give the delegates the right, which was really theirs, to choose the vice-presidential candidate in open convention.

#### Kefauver Enters the Race

Shirpser: Well, there was pandemonium, and nobody went to bed that night. I knew Estes would want those of us who had played major roles in his campaigns to get together in his suite. We flocked in, and he was there to meet us. His former national campaign chairman, Howard McGrath, didn't want him to run for vice-president. He said that it was going to be another slap-in-the-face at that convention. He said, "It's probably a set-up and you're probably going to be defeated again. Haven't you had enough, Estes? Don't let them do this to you." So Estes said that he was going to talk to Adlai. If Adlai gave him his word that it was going to be an open convention, that there were no commitments, no plans, then Estes said, "I'm going to prove that I can win something in a Democratic national convention. I can win on that floor and I'm going out there and make the fight. I've been pushed around long enough." These aren't his exact words but this meaning was there.

Chall: It was a challenge and he wasn't going to back out.

Shirpser: Yes, he felt that he had done everything that a human being could



Shirpser: do to help Adlai get nominated, and this was not the kind of treatment he expected or deserved.

Chall: What about Gorman discussing the fact that Elmo Roper was at one of these sessions, probably that same one, and was urging Kefauver to stay in the race?

Shirpser: I can't say this of my own knowledge. It could well be. Elmo Roper was close to Estes and was very helpful. He may well have been there and urged him. I know that Colonel Roberts, who was also one of the leaders in Estes' campaigns, wanted Estes to make the race. Many of the rest of us did, too. For my part, I wanted him to enter the contest. There comes a point beyond which you're not willing to accept domination. "So let's go in there and make a fight for it."

After all, Estes was starting with a large block of votes of his own delegates which no one else had, and he also knew delegates from all over the country. Of course, the big obstacle was Estes' home state of Tennessee. I formerly told you that Governor Clement, with his power over the delegation, had urged them to make a commitment which was different from what they had done before. It was to the effect that Tennessee was committed to support any Tennessean in the national convention as long as he had an opportunity to win. Of course, this would cover Clement, and Senator Gore, and it would cover Kefauver. But that resolution was actually very anti-Kefauver, and it was a terrible disappointment to Estes. That was the situation in Tennessee.

#### Clara Assigned Special Floor Duties

Shirpser: Estes asked Howard McGrath to be his floor manager at the convention, and Howard agreed to help him, after Estes decided to make the contest. Immediately, caucuses sprang up all over the city. Fortunately I had Ad to take me around. I started to phone, calling the chairmen of different delegations. Ad and I went to as many caucuses as we could reach during that night. Estes said, "Go to all the caucuses you can. Get some sleep first, because I want you to be one of my contacts with Howard McGrath at the convention."

You know there is a "command post" right by the podium where the speaker is, and that's where the candidates have their



Shirpser: campaign manager so that you can relay messages from the floor as you see the situations develop. Howard could phone to Estes at his headquarters, having a direct line to him at the Sportsman's Palace next to the convention hall, and he could get right through to Estes and tell him of critical situations, and get his thinking on them.

Chall: In those days how did you get messages to McGrath at the command post? They weren't using floor telephones then.

Shirpser: No, I had to fight my way down the aisles. Believe me, that was a chore. Somebody would usually go ahead of me and break trail, but I kept doing that, and it was the most exhausting thing I have ever done in my life. The aisles were jammed with people. You had to fight your way through. I couldn't do it very often, but I would try to make a sweep of the convention delegations for which I was responsible, and then report to Howard, at intervals, as often as I could manage it.

I had wonderful people helping me. For instance, in Michigan, Governor "Soapy" Williams and Neal Staebler, who was the state chairman (and later was a national committeeman) were in charge there. Michigan was for Estes for vice-president. They kept in touch with all the periphery of delegations around them, so when I got to them they could tell me what the thinking was. For example: "Oklahoma is going to give so many votes to Kefauver, so many to so-and-so, so many to so-and-so." They were keeping a running tally. I couldn't be all over the floor and listening to the voting, too.

Another wonderful contact was in Pennsylvania. Governor David Lawrence and Matt McClosky were both my contacts there. All four of these people were top people. In Ohio there was Governor Mike DiSalle, an excellent ally.

So I would make the rounds, checking with seven or eight different delegations, and they would give me the information which they had been amassing. The difficulty of getting through to them was unbelievable--you would almost get knocked down in the aisle. Usually some Kefauver delegate would be ahead of me, some big, burly person pushing to help me through. If I'd lose them, or they would be called back to their caucuses, there was the terrible problem of getting around that crowded and noisy place.



Shirpser: Many national committeewomen also were very helpful to me and kept giving me information about the Kefauver votes in their states. The women who come into my mind immediately--although there were several others--are Mrs. Thelma Sharp of New Jersey, Mrs. Myrtle McIntyre of New Hampshire, and Mrs. Martha Ragland of Tennessee.

I was interested in the reaction when Kennedy started to roll up a large vote. Matt McCloskey (who was a prince of the Catholic church), and David Lawrence (who was one of the most prominent Catholics in the country) were not for Kennedy for vice-president. In reading Gorman's book, I noted that he mentioned that a Missouri delegate had said the same thing, too--that there were eleven Catholics in his delegation and every one of them was opposed to Kennedy because they didn't want the Catholic issue to come up again. They also thought it would hurt Adlai. They really felt the time was not yet ripe in 1956 for a Catholic to run for national office. That was their sincere conviction. They were all good Catholics, but they felt this was not for the best interests of Adlai or the Democratic party, or even for the Catholics.

#### Lyndon Johnson's Interest

Chall: As I understand it, there were caucuses all over when you were trying to get votes for Kefauver, even though you had Kennedy, Humphrey, Gore, Clement, perhaps Robert Wagner, and Lyndon Johnson all wanting it.

Shirpser: Lyndon Johnson did not want it for himself. He wanted to choose the nominee. In the beginning he urged the southern states to go with Kennedy. Then later, I think he realized--I was later told so with much emphasis--that a man's got to have his home state in order to win. The best way to stop Kefauver was to find another candidate in Tennessee. This seemed to be Lyndon Johnson's motivation. Lyndon did not want Kefauver.

I think the basis of this was that he couldn't control him. All through Estes' senatorial career he had been treated vindictively by Lyndon Johnson (especially when he was majority leader) because Estes was unwilling to take orders. Estes was elected to do what he thought was right and he continued to do that, and this was something that Lyndon could not take. I'm





Shirpsr: not saying that Lyndon Johnson wasn't right a good deal of the time, but if Estes didn't think he was right, he didn't go along.

For instance, Estes cast a lone vote on issues like the move to outlaw the Communist party. Estes was the only man in the whole Senate who said that this resolution to outlaw the Communist party was wrong. Estes cast the only vote against it. Later, the Senate reversed itself, proving that Estes' decision was the right one.

Estes was the only southern senator to refuse to sign the Southern Manifesto. Even liberal southern senators signed it, with the exception of Estes. Many who voted for it later regretted that prejudicial vote against civil rights. These things infuriated Lyndon Johnson.

The way the nominations went--I think that Senator Albert Gore was nominated at first. The people who nominated him were both reactionaries. One was Lieutenant Governor Lester Maddox of Tennessee. The other was former Congressman Battle [L.C.] of Alabama. This made Albert Gore, who was really quite liberal, appear to be almost a Dixiecrat. This also demonstrated that he couldn't get prominent Democrats from other states to either nominate or second his nomination.

Mike DiSalle, who was later governor of Ohio (he may have been governor-elect at the time), was certainly one of the most prominent Democrats in the convention. He nominated Estes, with an eloquent and excellent speech. He spoke of Estes' tremendous qualifications, the wide knowledge he had of national conditions, of his strong voting record. He developed the theme which many others used later, that the Democratic party could present its two best known and finest Democrats: Adlai for president and Estes for vice-president. These were men of the highest stature, each of whom had sought the presidency in the primaries.

The nomination was seconded by Senator Richard Neuberger of Oregon who had national prominence. Another excellent seconding speech was made by Jimmy Roosevelt, the son of our former beloved President Franklin Roosevelt, and I had a part in this. Jimmy previously called me and said that he would like to second the nomination of Estes. He had done that in 1952 when he was national committeeman for California. So I did go to Estes and Estes was delighted. This was one of the nice things: People knew that if they wanted to reach Estes they could do it



Shirpser: through me. This gave me a sense of identification, and it gave me an opportunity for accomplishment.

The third one nominated, I believe, must have been Senator Kennedy. He was nominated by Leroy Collins of Florida.

I don't have all the statistics on the others. Humphrey was nominated from Minnesota, Robert Wagner from New York, and Governor Hodges from North Carolina. I think that Wagner and Hodges withdrew almost immediately. But people like to have their names presented and to be on national television.

#### Split in the California Delegation

Shirpser: On the first ballot Estes was ahead. We had had a second caucus by then, preliminary to the vote from the California delegation. Estes had asked me to introduce him to the California delegates' caucus. But I talked it over with several other people who knew the delegation well. Everyone knew I was for Estes. It would be much more valuable for Estes to get another Democratic Stevenson leader to introduce him. I think that it was Congressman Holifield who did it. Congressman Holifield had a lot of influence with the delegation.

The vote was taken. I have it here someplace.

Chall: I think I have it. Gorman writes that the votes on the first ballot were: Kefauver 33, Kennedy 10-1/2, Humphrey 23-1/2.

Shirpser: You're probably correct. I have a list of names of who voted and how they voted. It may not be absolutely accurate but it certainly is accurate enough, because somebody was keeping tab on it and gave it to me later.

Chall: What was the feeling in the caucus? Could you realize that it was going to be split these three ways, and for what reasons?

Shirpser: It was obviously split. Many of the most responsible people in the delegation voted for Kefauver for all the good reasons. Some of the older people in the party who had had a great deal of political power were for Kennedy.

Chall: What were their reasons?



Shirpser: I believe that they thought that Kennedy would win, as well as liking him. That's an awfully good reason, the fact that you think the man you are voting for will win, and then you can tell him that you supported him.

Chall: It's not that they were anti-Kefauver necessarily? They thought Senator Kennedy had more of a chance?

Shirpser: I think many were anti-Kefauver.

According to this list, quite a few of the labor people voted for Humphrey. I am not giving you the names of which delegates supported the different candidates, because this was a closed vote, taken by roll call.

At any rate, the people I knew best, and they weren't necessarily Kefauver people, including several legislators and congressmen, voted for Kefauver for vice-president.

There's great discussion during a caucus, and they question the candidate when he is there. So it can be a lengthy proceeding. The press isn't there when they vote. I believe the press comes with the candidates when they speak, but the vote is carried out without the press being there. Many delegates don't want their votes recorded in the caucus. After the candidate leaves, there is wide discussion among the delegates.

Chall: How are the votes taken in the caucus? Are they taken on the floor? Is there somebody tallying them at the time?

Shirpser: No, they are taken in a private meeting. When you caucus you go off the floor. You couldn't hear yourself think on the convention floor. We had a caucus room. Various delegations kept leaving the floor to caucus many times during the voting, as necessary. But if you do, you might miss your vote entirely. The chairman would announce: "California passes," if you are not there to vote during a roll call. Then they come back to you. There is the danger that if you don't get back on time, you may lose your vote completely. So to caucus during the convention really presents problems.

Chall: Then the vote is taken by voice vote in the caucus?

Shirpser: They go down the list and call your name and you say how you vote. I couldn't vote, because I was only an alternate. This really



Shirpser: hurt me--to be there, to want so badly to vote for Estes for vice-president and not to be able to do so, because I was only an alternate delegate.

In line with this matter of how we took our votes during a caucus something occurred in the California delegation which was quite dramatic. There was a division in the delegation and I've indicated that some of the older party members who liked power were for Kennedy, while the more liberal were for Kefauver. During the period of that voting, the tension, the strain, the stress, and the excitement made delegates almost out of control. People were growling and roaring all over the convention. It was almost frightening. This close Kefauver-Kennedy contest was bitterly fought on the convention floor.

So, some of the "king-makers" in the California delegation decided to make a strong bid for Kennedy, and Ben Swig was one of them. Drew Pearson authenticates what I am saying. "Ben Swig said, 'Let California be the one to make the next vice-president.'" So Bill Malone, and Ellie Heller, and Ben Swig, and Jack Shelley all started working on Pat Brown, the chairman of the delegation, to announce that the California delegation was voting unanimously for Kennedy.

Pat Brown grabbed a mike in all this excitement, without getting a vote from the delegation. Really, people there were almost out of control. He was waving the standard trying to get Sam Rayburn's attention. With that, Jimmy Roosevelt, George Killion, Peter Odegard, and Chet Holifield practically wrestled him to the ground. They pulled the microphone away from him. They said, "Are you out of your mind? You can't make an announcement without a vote. Take the delegation off the floor and we'll caucus if that's what you want. You can't make that announcement without a caucus and a delegation vote. We'll all protest it."

So Pat realized what he was doing and desisted. But can you realize the excitement of that situation? When Kefauver was leading in the votes of the California delegation, Pat almost announced that Kennedy had a majority vote. The only thing I can say is that Pat certainly wouldn't have done it if he had been in a normal frame of mind. This is just an example of the terrible excitement that grips people during a convention contest so that they hardly know what they are doing. They become so feverish and so excited that they don't think normally.





Shirpser: But that was a very dramatic incident. I thought it ought to be recorded.

I think it's interesting what Estes did about Humphrey. You know Minnesota was one of Estes' strongest states. I believe their chairman was Bob Short, whom I knew well. He came to one of Estes' meetings, and said that Minnesota was going to vote for Kefauver for vice-president on the first ballot. Humphrey called Estes and he said that it would be very harmful to him if his own state did not give him their vote on the first ballot. He asked Estes to give him that consideration. And Estes did.

This is another reason why Estes was so great. He was able to see Hubert's point of view, regarding his own state. Estes knew how much he was suffering because of what Tennessee was doing to him. Bob Short of Minnesota was opposed to Estes' decision. He did not want his Minnesota delegation to vote for Humphrey, because Estes had won the Minnesota primary. But they finally arranged it that on the first ballot the vote would go to Humphrey. Then on the second ballot they would switch to Kefauver. Estes knew he probably could not win on the first ballot. I thought this was a most generous, gallant gesture on Estes' part. I'm sure Hubert appreciated it too.

#### Lyndon Johnson's Strategy

Shirpser: The vote on the first ballot, by the way: Estes 483 and Kennedy 304. So Estes had a considerable lead on the first ballot. But at that point LBJ got to work. The reason I know a good deal about this was that I came staggering down the aisle and I happened to go by the Texas delegation, and Hilda Weinert, who was a good friend and national committeewoman from Texas, looked up and saw me and got up and pulled me down to a seat beside her. She said, "My national committeeman is on the floor some place or other, his seat is vacant temporarily. You look like you are going to collapse any second. For heaven's sake, sit down and rest. You can't go on doing to yourself what you're doing." So I sat down, gladly. I looked up and found myself directly behind Lyndon Baines Johnson. He was closer to me than I am to you. He was sitting right in front of me.

Around him, I found senators, and governors, and congressmen, all asking him what he wanted them to do. They were running



Shirpser: around that floor like messenger boys at his command. I never saw so much power concentrated in one man as I saw at that convention in LBJ's hands. He would say...(Let's, for example, just pick a state at random), "What does Virginia want?" The senator, or the congressman, or the governor from Virginia would say for instance, "Well, I'd like a new bridge over the Podunk River." "It's yours, go back and tell them 'not Kefauver,' that I'm going to back Gore from here on in. Gore is the candidate and he can stop Kefauver, and I'm for Gore. That's the message."

He sent them around that floor with this type of message. If somebody wanted an appointment for his son to go to West Point; if somebody wanted an appointment as a judge; whatever they wanted they could have, if they stopped Kefauver. I sat there consumed with such fury I can understand how people commit violence. Hilda told me later that I picked up my purse and she thought I was going to hit Johnson over the head with it. She might have been correct! I don't know. I was beyond the point where logic or reason counted. All I knew was that I had to stop Johnson in his all-out effort to "stop Kefauver." I said, "Hilda, I've got to leave here because I just can't stand any more of this." She said, "I know. I deplore it too."

So I left, and went up to Howard, and told him what was happening. I had sat there in the Texas delegation right behind Johnson and I had heard it. Lyndon Johnson didn't look around, and he didn't know I was there. He expected that his national committeeman was behind him in his usual seat.

Later when I saw Albert Gore after the convention ended, he told me that the pressure Lyndon Johnson exerted on him was more than he could stand, but he now realized what a terrible thing he had done. He said that I probably had a very low opinion of him. I said, "Yes, that's true, Albert. You would never have been United States Senator if Estes hadn't taken on Senator McKellar, who was the incumbent senator and campaigned for you in opposition to Senator McKellar's reelection. A United States Senator rarely opposes the senior senator from his state. Estes campaigned for you, and you knew that Estes had to have Tennessee supporting him in order to win his contest in the 1956 convention. How could you let yourself be used in that way? You say to forgive you. Of course I forgive you, but I don't think I can ever forget it. I think you've harmed yourself irreparably on the national scene." Several years later, Albert Gore was defeated for reelection as U.S. Senator. I think



Shirpser: the people in Tennessee never forgave him for letting himself be used by Lyndon Johnson in order to "stop Kefauver." Under the Tennessee delegation's rules as long as he had an opportunity to win and Clement was supporting Gore, they could use this device to stop Kefauver.

Chall: Was this made clear by the Nashville Tennessean?

Shirpser: Oh, yes.

#### Kefauver Wins: The Drama Behind-the-Scenes

Shirpser: This is what really happened in the next roll call. This was one of the most exciting times that ever happened in all my life. The votes were piling up for Kennedy at that point. Gore had evidently left the delegation and gone somewhere in back of the convention hall, where Martha Ragland met him. Gorman gives Martha Ragland credit for having persuaded Gore to withdraw.

I don't want to minimize Martha's hard work and her effectiveness and her fine qualifications, but here is a clipping from Drew Pearson's columns in which he wrote a three-part series on how the vice-presidential nomination was won. He says that Martha Ragland tried to persuade Gore to withdraw but he turned her down.

I know the way the vice-presidential race, at the climax, really happened, but no one has revealed how it happened until this time. But I do, because I was so involved in the heart of it.

The last time I made the convention rounds visiting the Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan delegations, where I had top-flight people advising me and reporting to me, they all said Kennedy was rapidly piling up the votes then, and that Senator Gore wasn't getting any place. But if Tennessee didn't come out for Estes at once, he was through. Tennessee had to switch support to Kefauver immediately. It is a basic rule in politics, you've got to have your home base supporting you. If you don't have your home base, what right have you to think that you can do well in the rest of the country? I think that this is a logical assumption.



Shirpser: After the various delegations had told me that one state after another was going to Kennedy, I managed to get up front to Howard McGrath. Friends who live in Illinois told me they saw me on Illinois TV rush up to Howard, grab him by the shoulders, and shake him violently. I was beside myself at that point. You know there's just so much you can stand in one day, and my day had been going on for twenty-four hours.

Chall: Was this immediately after you had been behind Johnson?

Shirpser: No, it was somewhat later. All my contacts had told me, "The bandwagon is rolling for Kennedy. The only thing that can stop him now is for Tennessee to come out for Kefauver. If Gore stays in, Kennedy will win." So I told Howard this bad news, and pleaded with him, "Howard, do something, do something. You've got to do something." He said, "For God's sake, what can I do?"

Then, like a miracle, up walked Silliman Evans, Jr. You know, timing in politics, and luck are two major factors. Silliman Evans was beside himself, too, with anxiety and frustration. He said, "What can we do?" So I told him what everybody had told me. I said, "Your father would have wanted you to do something at this point. So go over to the Tennessee delegation and threaten that your newspapers will never support Gore again, that you'll never support Clement again. Go over there and make Gore withdraw." Howard McGrath said, "By all means, I agree. You came by just at the right time. You're the only one in this whole convention who can change this situation. You can nominate Estes Kefauver if you go to Tennessee right now."

Howard had to stay where he was, but I ran, following Silliman Evans, Jr. You know, he wasn't quite five feet tall. I have a picture of his father, and he looked just like him, a short, rather chubby man. Gore was tall, over six feet. Clement was way over six feet tall. So Silliman rushed up to him and raised his fist as far as he could, right under the nose of Senator Gore and he started swearing at him--words I never heard before. He said, "If you don't withdraw this minute, so help me God you'll never be reelected to anything--not as senator, not even as dog-catcher. You get up there and you withdraw." He went to Governor Clement and he said the same things to him in the same way.

Chall: The power of the press.





Shirpser: Yes. So Gore and Clement waved the banner of Tennessee's delegation, and Sam Rayburn, thinking they were going to go for Gore again, said, "Tennessee is waving their banner. They want to be recognized." So he called on them.

Gorman, in his book on Kefauver, was trying to explain why Rayburn did what he did. I think I know the reason. LBJ had said, "Stop Kefauver," and so Sam Rayburn was trying to stop Kefauver. The best way to do it was to have Tennessee come out again for Gore. But, after Tennessee was recognized, Senator Gore took the floor and withdrew in favor of Estes Kefauver.

A real shock wave went through the whole convention. Then Clement announced, after a brief interval, "All Tennessee's votes will go to their great senior senator, Estes Kefauver." For him, to utter that praise of Estes, must have been a bitter moment.

This changed the whole picture. One state after another started voting for Estes and switching their votes to Estes, and he finally won the nomination for vice-president by a substantial vote. As I told you before, when the bandwagon gets rolling, everybody wants to get on it!

Kennedy had been within about fifty votes of winning. He had over six hundred votes at that point when Tennessee switched to Kefauver. The final count was 775-1/2 for Estes and 589 for Kennedy.

Chall: That must have really produced a shock throughout the convention.

Shirpser: Silliman Evans and Howard hugged and kissed me. We were just beside ourselves with joy. Almost immediately the "Tennessee Waltz" was played by the convention band. That had such meaning for me, because they always played that tune wherever Estes was, when he was campaigning. It almost became my song, too. Sometimes when there was a dance, on campaign trips when Nancy wasn't there, Estes would turn to me and ask me to dance the "Tennessee Waltz" with him. So it had such personal memories for me and when they started playing it at the convention, I started to cry. When Estes came onto the platform with Nancy triumphantly, with smiles and waves, Howard started to cry, too. And we both stood there right in front of them, weeping. Estes shook his head at us, "Don't cry," and smiled warmly to us. At last, he was being given all this wonderful approbation.



Chall: Gorman said that there was a tremendous ovation when he came out.

Shirpser: Yes, there was. I think the convention really wanted him. Only the machinations of the political bosses prevented his victory at an earlier time. I truly think the vote in that convention was a triumph for the liberals, as well as for Estes Kefauver. I think it was the defeat of the political bosses by the delegates in that convention.

The southern states had been the ones supporting Kennedy. With their background of fundamentalist religion, they couldn't have wanted a Catholic. They were being pressured to "stop Kefauver." The liberal Eastern states, the Western states, and some Midwest states supported Kefauver. He had much popularity with the farm voters. He had always been for parity, and especially for the farmers in the lower income brackets.

In the beginning, it seemed to me that the Eastern establishment, except for Pennsylvania, were dominated by LBJ, and that the southern states were too. It really was a triumph for an open convention versus the political bosses who were not able to "deliver" that time. Because Silliman Evans, Jr. came by at the moment when something drastic had to be done, history was made. I think by then Gore was really feeling guilty about his role, and his withdrawal was a decisive factor. Certainly Martha Ragland's influence had counted there, too.

Drew Pearson speaks of all the pressures that were put on Senator Gore. His article that I'm going to give you is really interesting. There are three full pages. Drew didn't know about my role in that momentous crisis. But if I hadn't just happened to go over to Howard at that crucial point in the voting, and if Silliman Evans, Jr. hadn't just happened to come by, and if I hadn't just got the word from experienced delegates who counted, who strongly stated that Tennessee had to come out for Kefauver right now, who knows what might have happened?

I think I helped make history there. I was happy that I had the chance to do something important for Estes, and I think for our country, too. At least, it showed that you could have an open convention. The delegates could vote as they chose, rather than being dominated.

Chall: How do you think that Stevenson felt about this? Do you think he was satisfied? Did you ever discuss this excitement with him?



Shirpser: He soon came on the convention platform with Estes and Nancy, of course, and he spoke very highly of Estes, and introduced him to the convention, with warmth and eloquence. Estes made an excellent response, brief, but very effective, telling how grateful he was to the delegates; that he accepted with humility the responsibility it entailed. He said that he thought it was magnificent for the first time in contemporary American politics that a great political party chose its vice-presidential candidate in a free and open convention. He thought this strengthened the processes of democracy and hoped it would set a precedent for the future. (Sadly, it didn't, however.)

Then Estes spoke of Adlai and of his great contributions to the political process; of his philosophy, high motives, his unusual gifts of intellect and wit. He said, "Perhaps I know better than most his capacity as an effective and untiring fighter." He spoke of the coming campaign and saluted Adlai with devotion and cooperation. He also paid tribute to President Truman.

Then he went on to speak of the task which was ahead. He was confident of victory with the help of the delegates and the Democratic party. He then said two things which I think are important, about the wider obligation than winning the presidency. We also had the duty to win a Democratic Congress, the duty to win statehouses and courthouses. He spoke of his desire to do all he could to help them get elected.

Then he said, "Now is not the night to talk about the duties of the vice-president, what his role should be. But I believe the chief function of the vice-president should not be that of political sharpshooter for his party. (He was obviously referring to Nixon.) It should not be that of providing the smear under the protection of the president's smile. We must not only be a party of criticism. We want to be a part of inspiration. As such, we must fire the imagination of the young people as well as the women of this nation whose support we can and must retain. As your vice-presidential candidate I promise you I will never demean that high office to traduce fellow Americans. I will never use it to sow division and distrust among the American people."

I think those principles were very important to enunciate at that point, with Ike being ill, and Nixon slated inevitably to have a vastly important role as vice-president, if Ike won the presidency.



Shirpser: After the convention ended, we met in Estes' suite and celebrated. Adlai asked me to a victory party in his suite, too. He had a large suite on the top floor of the hotel. It was a great party. Estes was there, too. It was really wonderful to have something to celebrate after all the defeats in which I had participated.

I have a letter from Congressman Saund. When he was running for office, I brought Estes down to his area which is the southernmost part of California. I'm sure Estes helped "Doc" Saund get elected. We always called him "Doc." He wrote me after the convention. "I did not have a chance to talk to you in Chicago after Estes' nomination for vice-president. I honestly believe you were personally responsible in a really big way for that victory. Such tireless energy, ability and dedication are extremely rare in this world. You acted superbly throughout the campaign under the most trying circumstances. We continue to need you in our midst."

I thought that was a wonderful letter from a congressman who was a member of the Stevenson delegation. Then I found another letter from Phil Burton, who was then national vice-president of the Young Democrats. As I told you once I have always enjoyed encouraging and working with young people in politics. His courtship of Sala, who was one of my best volunteers, blossomed in our office, and I always felt very close to them. Phil wrote to me after the convention, too. "I want to express my very high opinion of the manner in which you served in your important office. Despite your great responsibilities, you have always given us who are younger members of the party, the benefit of your wisdom and experience. More important, however, you have demonstrated in the highest party councils that one can remain true to principles, and to have the courage to stand by them without regard to personal cost. As an example, your standing by Estes Kefauver despite the fact that it foreclosed the possibility of your reelection as national committeewoman." I thought that was a beautiful letter, and I appreciated deeply what he wrote about me.

Chall: It's nice when they write letters like this because they have nothing to gain by it either.

Shirpser: Yes. I had already given up the national committeewoman's post. Both those letters I remember well. There were many more fine letters from Californians, as well as from other National Committee members and congressional friends.





# YOUNG DEMOCRATIC CLUBS OF AMERICA

489a

OFFICIAL YOUTH ORGANIZATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

1001 CONNECTICUT AVENUE N.W.

WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

June 24, 1956

PHONE DISTRICT 7-1717

EDIT  
IDA. BUNN  
BIRMAN STREET  
DENVER, COLORADO  
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L. A. BURTON  
MALET STREET  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Hon. Clara Shirpser,  
Democratic National Committeewoman  
2541 Hilgard Avenue  
Berkeley, California

PRESIDENT  
GAET BLOCKER  
NORTH MERIDIAN  
TAMPA, FLORIDA

Dear Clara:

PRUDENT  
SO LANCIONE  
ASTOR ROAD STREET  
CINCINNATI, OHIO

I wanted to drop you a line at this time to express my thanks to you for all of the helpful advice and assistance that you have given me the past few years.

ETAY  
INEMOONEY  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

SUER  
VINHANDELMAN  
CAPS STREET  
73  
DALLAS, TEXAS

In addition, I wanted to express my very high opinion of the manner that you are, and have been, serving in your very important position in the highest of the Democratic Party Councils, - the National Committee.

UTI SECRETARY  
IAR J. MURPHY  
CONNECTICUT AVE. N.W.  
WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

Despite your great and time-consuming responsibilities, you have always taken time to give us younger members of the Party the benefit of your wisdom and experience. More important however, you have demonstrated that even in the highest party councils, one can remain true to their principles and have the courage to stand by them, without regard to apparent personal cost. Your willingness to stand by Estes Kefauver, despite the fact that it would foreclose the possibility of your considering to run for re-election to the post of National Committeewoman, is but the most recent example of the high standard of conviction and loyalty that you have set.

If we don't see you before then, - Sala and I are looking forward to seeing you and Ad in Chicago this August.

Sincerely your friend,

*A. Phillip Burton*

A. Phillip Burton,  
1st Vice-President,  
Young Democratic Clubs of America

APB:es



Shirpser: I suppose we go to the campaign now, don't we?

Chall: I think so. Can I ask you first some questions about Kennedy? Was it a surprise that somebody, who was more-or-less unknown at the time, could reach such a large following--even though it was perhaps politically motivated? How come? Why Kennedy? Why not Humphrey? Why couldn't the bandwagon be based on Humphrey? Was it because he was too liberal and well known?

Shirpser: It's hard to evaluate that accurately. Kennedy was making a strong bid for it. He was very well organized.

Chall: He came prepared?

Shirpser: I think his father must have made some calls to prominent Democrats prior to the convention. Some place in the press I read that his father made calls to people who had some obligation to him to support his son, Jack. He had given generously to many campaigns. He had had a position of great prominence, he was very wealthy. I think he collected some favors there, from some of the political leaders. But I would say that a major factor was LBJ "stopping Kefauver" and he thought Kennedy was the man to stop Kefauver. Otherwise his support of Kennedy is hard to explain. Surely they were so different in what they stood for, in their ideals, principles, methods of working, etc. Bobby Kennedy, of course, was all over the floor too, very effectively, and in speaking to caucuses. The Kennedys were always tremendously well organized.

Estes was working with volunteers, as usual, and by his own efforts, while Kennedy had more professional and experienced organization, and LBJ's support was a tremendous help to him. Humphrey was engulfed by all of this, and the Minnesota delegation was for Kefauver, as I explained earlier. Again the home base was missing for Humphrey, after that first ballot where Estes asked them to vote for Humphrey. One of the states passed to Minnesota who immediately gave their votes for Kefauver on the second ballot. So Humphrey withdrew.

Chall: If Kennedy really came prepared to run as a vice-president, that may have had something to do with Stevenson's unwillingness to make any kind of choice. I suppose there were pressures put on him too by Lyndon Johnson.

Shirpser: After Adlai announced that he wanted the convention to choose the vice-president, Adlai did assure Estes (when Estes phoned him)



Shirpser: that it would be a wide-open convention for the vice-presidency, that he would take no part in it, nor would he try to influence anybody. Estes had that assurance before he ran. I think Adlai was pleased. He certainly said so to me, and they got along very well together in the following campaign.

#### Estes Kefauver--An Assessment

Shirpser: There is a funny account in a news story about an "Alphonse and Gaston" act: that Estes would stand back and kind of push Adlai forward and say, "You go first." He pronounced the name as Ad-a-lai. Adlai would put his hand on Estes' arm and say, "No, you go first," while going up the ramps, or going up or down the steps of the plane. Inevitably, Adlai would give up first, and he would go first and Estes would follow. However, they didn't do so much campaigning together. Each conducted his campaign separately, to cover the country more effectively. I only remember two times when we all met at a given place.

Of course, Adlai went to the big cities and appeared on the most important television programs, while Estes was mostly in the smaller places. Time magazine said that "this was the most strenuous, the most comprehensive, the most tireless campaign that anyone had ever waged for national office." Somewhere I read that Estes covered over 60,000 miles and made 450 speeches. I never saw a man who could work as tirelessly as Estes Kefauver could. His stamina was unbelievable, and I think it was because of the strength that came to him from contact with people.

That's why I disagree so strongly with Gorman when he says that it was a superficial thing with Estes, that he really didn't like people much or that he didn't have any strong personal relationships with people. If I showed you some of my letters from him--the warm outpouring of his confidence in me, the hundreds of letters that end with praise of me, saying, "You were wonderful." "I'll never forget what you have done." "I consider you as close to me as my family." "With love, Estes." I mean, how much more can you give of yourself than that? I don't understand Gorman's evaluation of Estes.

Many people I know would almost lay down their lives for Estes, all through the country. I completely disagree with that



Shirpsen: estimate of Estes being cold. I do know he was introspective. There were times when you felt that he was almost standing outside of himself and thinking and evaluating and weighing what was happening. But that was an excellent quality. It prevented him from being stampeded.

The one thing that I think was a weakness, was that Estes liked so many people whether they deserved it or not. If they were for him, he liked them. He had some people supporting him, with whom I had to associate and whom I heartily disliked. They were the typical "coattail riders." They were supporting Estes because they had no other place to go. They thought he could win, and that some benefit would accrue to them too. But Estes was unsuspecting of people, and he would rather accept them at face value. Sometimes I thought his judgment wasn't as good as it might have been on people.

But he was great on evaluating issues, and on making important decisions. Though he made these decisions himself, he had a wonderful faculty of asking everybody in the room to express their opinions first, and he would listen. He would listen to the essence of what was said, and then he would say "Now, I have to evaluate this. Now I'll make my own decision." I think that's a great way to function. Look at Nixon with his cabinet. He seldom had meetings. When he did, he rarely asked anybody what they thought from what former members of the cabinet have since said. He told them what to do. This was not Estes' way, it was not FDR's way. I don't think it was Jack Kennedy's way, either. I don't know why Nixon appoints people to positions of responsibility and then seldom listens to them or cares what they think. I believe that this is one reason why there has been so much corruption in Nixon's government. He has operated with a few cronies, and the cabinet members, and national officials who were okayed by the Senate, have seldom had a chance to participate in important decisions. Cabinet members waited months sometimes before they could get through Nixon's "Palace Guard" to consult with him.

The thing that I minded so much about Gorman's book was his lack of information on the national scene. He knew well what was happening in the South and he had statistics. But the fact that he didn't even mention the California delegation, which was Estes' biggest victory in that 1952 campaign, shows a lack of pertinent national information. The California delegation was not very effective in the 1952 convention, but certainly more effective than most Kefauver delegations. And





Shirpser: the fact that we stayed loyal through to the bitter end was not even mentioned by Gorman. That didn't even get a line.

The following sounds like personal pique, but it really isn't. He didn't mention me once in that book, and no one was closer to Estes than I in the whole United States. Estes, himself, said so repeatedly. I was co-chairman of his national campaign committee, and I was on the executive committee for Stevenson and Kefauver in the general election. Why wouldn't Gorman have spoken to me, or to Howard McGrath, or to Jiggs Donohue before writing a book called Kefauver. Though superficial, I still think it is worth reading.

Chall: You pick up some facts, but you don't get it all.

Shirpser: I just don't think he understood Estes, or what he stood for, or what motivated him.

Chall: Gorman quotes from a book by Ralph G. Martin called Ballots and Bandwagons. That seems to be one of his main sources; he doesn't have too many primary sources in his book. But he did use Martin, and I wondered whether you...

Shirpser: No, I don't think I knew Ralph Martin. I have many newspaper articles here.

Chall: You have a great wealth of material.

Shirpser: Here is the San Francisco News. It had a picture of Estes and a good article which somebody sent me. I have the Times and the Washington Post. I have so many newspaper articles that if Mr. Gorman had ever bothered to read them he would have gotten so much wider information than he seems to have had. I believe he just talked to the Tennessee people chiefly and came up with what he found there. Of course, they knew Estes well.

There is an interesting article dated right after the convention by Carey McWilliams in The Nation, in which he speaks highly of Senator Kefauver's nomination and the fact that it was an open, under-the-lights convention. He tells, too, of the paradox that this liberal, moderate victory spells irretrievable defeat for the old-guard courthouse branch of the Democratic party, which was my own conclusion.

Chall: It certainly wasn't though.



Shirpser: No. They came back strongly. But he said that "Senator Kefauver for vice-president not only added to Stevenson's triumph but gave it an extra and creative dimension. His strategic and timely withdrawal from the presidential race made possible an unfettered victory for Mr. Stevenson. Consequently the presidential nominee now has a magnificent opportunity to liberate the Democratic party from its partial bondage to southern racism, to Branchwater and Bourbon, Missouri bossism and undiluted Lyndon Johnsonism." ["Moderation Triumphs" The Nation, August 25, 1956] I think that was a strong statement.

I found in my mail yesterday an interesting article from the Adlai Stevenson Institute. I contribute to it, of course. It makes me feel good that people haven't forgotten Estes, when they are evaluating the national scene. There always is mention of him among responsible people when evaluating political history.

This is a "Working Paper 9/10," published by the Adlai Stevenson Institute. They send me their working papers regularly, and they are always very interesting. The author is discussing the 1950s and the 1960s and their importance in regard to what is happening today in the seventies. This is dated May, 1973. It's going to be in two parts, and is written by Murray Kempton. He is talking about Joseph McCarthy and the investigations in the fifties. He said, "We tend to forget that the most successful investigator in the fifties was not Senator McCarthy, but Senator Estes Kefauver, a quiet man whose demeanor had about it a kind of courtly innocence." I question that "courtly innocence" phrase. Estes had a very keen mind; he was a deep thinker; it wasn't just "courtly innocence."

"When Senator Kefauver began his investigation of crime the truly consequential bookies were calling themselves betting commissioners. They were generally men of north European origin, respected by their neighbors and sometimes absolutely revered by the local police. Their public manners were exemplary. They were, it is true, a little too sharp and sophisticated, but the most straight-laced sort could hardly have imagined them as criminals.

"Fortunately, Senator Kefauver and Senator Charles Tobey had the proper sensibilities, and were able to teach us that a man could look like your local banker and still live by violating the law. Fortunately, that lesson which might have been damaging to the innocence of the age was quickly obscured when Senator Kefauver moved on to the big city racketeers who



Shirpser: looked like no banker and who talked, except for the elegant Frank Costello, in primitive guttural that made all too clear their alien slum origins. There paraded among them an array of big city police detectives and politicians who had tolerated them, and this provided final proof of the sins of many urban denizens. By the time the hearings ended, Senator Kefauver had established that crime is so un-American an institution that no Protestant could even apply, a conspiracy so alien that most of its transactions were carried out in Sicilian dialect.

"Senator Kefauver performed these rites with courtesy and charm to these sacrificial victims that endeared him to all who watched. Senator McCarthy, on the other hand, was a savage. To keep sympathy with him it was necessary to feel a pitch of outrage against Communists and the Harvard faculty. But if Senator McCarthy destroyed himself by scourging, Senator Kefauver advanced himself comforting. He made himself liked and trusted by almost everybody except those big-city Democratic machines whose damaged reputations were henceforth a handicap to their party's campaigns, even while their intact power in its councils and their everlasting animosity towards Kefauver would forever disqualify him as a Democratic presidential nominee."

In 1973, Mr. Kempton is telling the truth of what I have been maintaining ever since 1952. It is sad that a man who performed such a great service to his country and who helped to end the Mafia connotations, and the crime, and the political connections between a few political leaders, only a few really, and the underworld, was exposed. Surely this was of benefit to the country. But it earned him this undying hatred among some political officials.

Before we start the campaign I've found a pamphlet which I kept and in which I evidently made frantic notes while Estes was campaigning. One of my jobs was: Before we got to a given place, to tell him who the county chairman was, who the congressional district vice-chairmen were, who the candidates were, so that Estes, when someone was introduced to him, would speak his name. Estes had a marvelous memory, photographic almost--if you told him Joe Smith was a candidate for the assembly in the Eighteenth Assembly District, he would say to Joe Smith when he was introduced, "I hope you win the campaign for the assembly," which endeared him greatly. That was my job to try to keep him informed of the local officials whom he would meet. So I had all of them listed here.



Shirpser: Then I found another note: "Estes, you didn't mention two of your delegates, Beverly Halco and Bill Penaluna. They sponsored this meeting. They are Ninth Congressional District co-chairmen. Don't forget!" So this was the kind of thing I was doing for him.

I kept this article by Wilma Dykeman in The Nation, because this speaks of Estes very glowingly and says, "Only the voters love him; that's Kefauver's dilemma." She wrote, "One of the myths about Kefauver is that he is a maverick, unpredictable and inconsistent." She goes down his voting record and says that he has never been irregular. "There is no more consistent liberal record in the Senate than Estes Kefauver's. Even when he was campaigning in 1954..." After he lost in 1952 there was terrible opposition to him in 1954 for his reelection, and he had a reactionary candidate probably who spent millions to defeat him. He had helicopters with loudspeakers, round-the-clock television programs where people phoned in to ask him questions. But Estes had an overwhelming victory.

And even when he was campaigning in Tennessee which is fairly conservative, and in many ways a reactionary state, he was still saying that the integration decision of the Supreme Court was the law of the land and we had to follow it. In spite of all this because of the respect they had for him he won.

She also mentions that in 1950 Time magazine selected him as one of the country's ten best senators. In 1951 the Washington Press Corps Poll placed him second in a vote for the ten best senators. So the people who knew him best were the ones who really recognized his worth.

I haven't mentioned a couple of things that happened in the convention which were interesting and I think should be mentioned. One of them was the way National Committee Chairman Paul Butler accepted Governor Shivers of Texas back into the party when former Chairman Mitchell had said how strongly he disagreed with Butler's stand, because he didn't believe that a man who supported Eisenhower against the nominee of the Democratic party should be welcomed back into the party.

Then Governor Shivers, according to Newsweek, said that he would be glad to heal the breach. He was probably the most influential of all those who bolted the party. He might want to return, he said, but only providing that Adlai Stevenson was not nominated for the presidency again. Here's a picture of





Shirpser: Butler welcoming Shivers back into the party. This leaves me with a sense of outrage. When Shivers said that he would not support the Democratic party if Adlai Stevenson were nominated again. I think it was terrible to welcome him back.

That was one thing. Another interesting clipping: "Democrats act to bar oath [the loyalty oath] at the national convention." They didn't bar it, as such, but there was a resolution that was voted for, which in effect had practically the same significance as the loyalty oath had in '52. It was just stated a little more tactfully. It was the Advisory Committee on Rules which took the action, and it was adopted by the convention.

"Instead of a loyalty oath the advisory group adopted a three-point resolution which set forth the responsibility of state organizations in designating convention delegates. It waives the loyalty oath for delegates unless they are challenged. And it also provides for the ouster of National Committee members who bolt the party ticket."

So this was quite an improvement on the situation that existed in 1952.

Then it also states, "It is understood that the delegates of the national convention, after being certified by the state organization, will participate in good faith in convention matters." This was very much the same thing that the loyalty oath in 1952 stated, except that went further in saying that after a majority of delegates had made the decision as to the nominee of the party it would be the responsibility of the delegates to go home and to support the nominee of the party.

The new resolution stated that they would oust people who bolted the party. So this was inconsistent with what Butler had done in welcoming back Shivers.

Chall: And this all happened within the same time-frame?

Shirpser: Yes. There is a very interesting article here. It was by Frank Kent, and I don't know in which newspaper it was. It says, "The split with several million voters in the South still exists. Largely this is due to the genius of Steve Mitchell for disunity." I thought that was rather a good phrase! Then it says, "A second result was the startling disclosure that neither Butler nor Mitchell is popular in the Democratic party, either personally



Shirpser: or politically." This made me feel that some of my struggles weren't based on my personality or what I had done, because this is strong language to use against two party chairmen.

They both were very cold people, very arrogant, very arbitrary. They never asked you. They told you. Obviously, you didn't do your best work for them under those conditions.



XIII THE STEVENSON-KEFAUVER CAMPAIGN  
(Interview 16, June 25, 1973)

Clara Shirpser Retires from the National Committee

Chall: We said last week we would start with the National Committee meeting which followed the convention. How were you and the other Kefauver people treated?

Shirpser: A whole group of us retired. Most of the people I knew did because we had still been supporting Kefauver who lost the nomination. Different states have different ways of selecting their National Committee members. Some do it through the State Central Committee. A few do it by putting the names on the ballot. Then, the majority did elect through the delegations that won the primary, on the theory they would know their own delegates, and be better able to select. I believe this is the logical method.

Paul Ziffren, at intervals tried to abolish the California system, and to make the change to election by the Executive Committee by the State Central Committee where he did get elected when John Anson Ford resigned. He evidently was prophetic about that because he was beaten when Pat supported Stanley Mosk for national committeeman. Paul Ziffren hadn't cooperated with Pat Brown, and Paul wanted power too much in his own tight fists.

At any rate, Paul made at least three or four attempts, but he had to withdraw every time, because he saw he was going to lose. I fought it, of course, because it seemed to me that our traditional system in California is the most democratic way. It's been a tradition in the National Committee that retiring members introduce their successors. It's a gesture of good sportsmanship and good will and it has been common practice



Shirpser: all through the years. I phoned Libby Smith, my successor, and told her I'd be very happy to do it; in fact I had written an introduction which highly praised her. She told me that Paul Ziffren had already asked her and she had agreed he was to do it. This was contrary to National Committee tradition, where the women introduced the women, and the men the men.

Many people came up to say goodbye to me and told me how sorry they were I wasn't going on and that they would miss me. They realized I had given up my post for Estes.

Then Adlai and Estes came to meet with the National Committee members, and they received a tremendous standing ovation, with applause that continued for a long time, auguring well for unity in the Democratic party.

This was a letter in which I reported to Senator Kefauver and explained what happened at the convention with Silliman Evans, Jr., in getting Tennessee to switch to Kefauver. Afterwards there was so much confusion and crowds of people I didn't have a chance to have a long talk with Estes. In the last paragraph I said, "You were so thoughtful and considerate as always, Estes, after the convention, to give me that wonderful recognition when you spoke to the National Committee." You see, they brought in Adlai and Estes to meet all the national committee members and when Estes spoke, he realized this was a sad day for me. Although I was so delighted at his victory that it compensated for everything. But it really was wonderfully kind of him to single me out and to say how valuable I had been in his campaign, what an excellent job he thought I had done, and that he hoped I would continue in some leading position in the Democratic party.

In fact, this is probably the time to say that a few months later he phoned me from Washington and said, "You know, every once in awhile I have the opportunity to make an appointment, and something has come in that I think you'd love." In the State Department in Washington there is a reception center (I think that is what it's called) where you meet distinguished foreign visitors, and you help them with their schedules, and you make reservations for them, and you find out where they want to go, what it is they want to see. You introduce them to the appropriate people and you entertain for them. You have a budget to do that. It's one of the most desired posts that you could have, because it means a wonderful life for you--meeting all sorts of interesting people who are leaders in their own





Shirpser: countries and getting to know them. Later, if you travel to their countries they reciprocate, too. Of course I longed to do it.

He said, "This is an appointment I can make, and you are the first person that I am offering it to. I said, "Estes, don't tell me any more about this wonderful, tempting offer. You know I can't do it. You know I can't break up my marriage and go to live in Washington." He said, "Why don't you discuss it with Ad?" I said, "I'm afraid to, because he would probably say, 'go ahead and do it.' And it really wouldn't be fair to him, so I'll have to say no right now." How I longed to do this! I said, "Please give me until tomorrow, and if I don't call you then, you'll know I'm doing what I should do, which isn't what I want to do."

I told him how much I appreciated his offering this to me. But the more I thought about it the more I realized I'd be going back and forth all the time, and it really wasn't fair to Ad whose business was in San Francisco. He loved our home. He was so unselfish and considerate he probably would have said, "It will be a wonderful experience for you, go ahead and do it for a year." But I knew it wasn't fair. I didn't even tell Ad about it, until months later.

I thought I was being unselfish, because I was feeling awfully let down at that time. All the important things I had done were gone, and this would have put me right into the heart of things again. And I had lots of good friends in Washington. But it simply wasn't a thing I could do without breaking up my marriage.

Women like Katie Louchheim were chairmen of the reception center, later after she retired as national chairman of the Women's Division. She had a beautiful home in Georgetown right outside of Washington, D.C. Her husband was a retired banker, so this fit right in with their lives, and they entertained beautifully.

Chall: Before we go on to the campaign itself, could you place yourself in the campaign in 1956. What role were you given in this campaign by the people who set it up. Who were they?

Shirpser: Bill Blair, Adlai's law partner and campaign administrative assistant, was always very considerate and was aware of whatever ability I have. He always saw to it when he was here that I was



Shirpser: in the forefront of all that was happening. In California I was put on finance committees, which I disliked, but I tried to do as well as I could, and, obviously, funds were needed badly. So I was still raising money for Estes to help him with his campaign deficit before the convention. After that, I started raising funds for Stevenson and Kefauver. There were \$100-a-plate-dinners and many other forms of fund raising in which I participated and in which I was given some responsibility.

But I must say, and this is corroborated by all the press, that Estes asked that all his former supporters, who had had responsibilities, be given key roles in the campaign. I wrote to Estes reporting to him and I wrote to Howard McGrath that in California, they were given "paper posts." They were told they were chairmen of this and that, and were rarely asked to sit in on a policy decision, any more than I was. Occasionally I was asked to introduce the speaker at a dinner. But as far as having any key role in California, I was very disappointed.

#### Aboard the Campaign Plane

Shirpser: Let's get to our 1956 general campaign. I'd like to tell you a little about what it's like to travel on a campaign plane. I did this with Estes about three times in California and several times nationally in the Stevenson-Kefauver campaign.

Estes was given a great big TWA Mainliner in which to campaign as the vice-presidential candidate. He had a pilot, a navigator, two stewardesses aboard. They were wonderful, and we all got to be such good friends. I have all their names and addresses. We used to send Christmas cards to each other for years. Then we had a whole press corps with us. This made it very interesting, but it also meant that when you boarded the plane late at night you couldn't sleep, because every typewriter was clacking at one time. We were served food and drink, and most people drank. They were in such a state of exhaustion. They had their press stories to get out before we got to the next stop. When I tell you a typical itinerary you'll tell me I'm exaggerating. But I have it here in black and white. How anyone survives three or four days, let alone a week, let alone a long campaign! You have to be a superman or superwoman.

The press has some interesting traditions which I found very likeable. For instance, as soon as we were airborne I



Shirpser: heard clapping all over the plane. I turned around and said to one of the press, "Why are you doing that?" He said, "We always do that. We used to ride those little planes, and it was a real gamble whether you were ever going to get up in the air. We'd start up and we'd slip down. We'd go up again and slip down again. So we got the habit that every time the plane is airborne we would clap." Later, when we landed at the first stop I heard this clapping again. I said, "Now what?" My reporter friend answered, "It's the same thing. We've landed. We're on earth. We haven't cracked up, so we clap." So they did that at every start and stop. Sometimes there were eight, nine and ten stops a day. This clapping went on every time; they were following tradition. I mentioned this to several political people who hadn't heard about this press custom. No one who hadn't been on a campaign plane would have know that that is what the press did.

It's exciting aboard the plane. There's so much going on all the time. Estes used to have the first seat. The whole plane was one class, of course. He sat in the part that would have been first class. Those were bigger and more comfortable seats. I was just across the aisle. This very nice seat was assigned to me. The seat beside Estes was empty always for the use of people who wanted to talk to him. They would first send word and then they would be asked to come for a conference. There were several assistants on the plane, several secretaries. There was an advance man. There was also Charles Tyroler, who was in charge of all the arrangements for the plane.

When I first boarded the plane--I think I flew to Southern California to meet them--Estes asked me to come sit next to him, and bring him up-to-date on what was happening in California.

Once I went all the way back to Washington with his party. I left the plane at Washington and flew back. Another time I went through all the New England states with him. It was in the fall. That's where I saw my first beautiful fall foliage.

The first time--it just shows you how difficult it sometimes is to work with other women--there were only three of us on the whole plane. All the rest were men. There were Myrtle McIntyre, and Mabelle Kennedy, and I on this tour. Myrtle was chairman of the national volunteers for Kefauver, the clubs. Mabelle was on the executive committee. She was vice-chairman of the campaign, as I was.



Chall: You had a position on the Kefauver campaign committee?

Shirpser: Yes, I was national vice-chairman, with Jiggs Don hue as campaign chairman. Howard McGrath was vice-chairman, too. Of course I was very flattered and very happy to do it, because it gave me a chance to sit in on policy and strategy meetings, I was traveling back and forth to wherever they were meeting. Howard McGrath was with us on this tour I have been telling you about, so I had a chance to talk with him at length.

Estes called me over to sit by him. We were in the midst of a conversation. I was bringing him up-to-date. I had made notes to tell him about various things. Then they announced lunch was being served. I started to get up and he said, "No, sit down and have lunch with me. We'll continue to talk."

Afterwards, separately, both Myrtle and Mabelle came to me and said, "You've just come on this national tour. We've come all the way from the East to California. You don't realize that you don't sit there and eat with Estes. You leave the seat free so he can keep conferring with other people." I said, "Why don't you go and ask Estes why I sat there? I'm sorry if he didn't invite you to lunch, but he did invite me, and as long as he invites me to sit there and have lunch with him I shall do it, at every opportunity."

I was furious. After all, Estes wanted me to sit there and have lunch with him, and seemingly they hadn't been so honored. So they were jealous or resentful. These two women were very good friends of mine, so it's difficult to see why they couldn't be more objective. It wasn't just that Estes wanted me to be with him, although that was part of it, I'm sure. But I had all kinds of information to bring him, questions for which they wanted answers in California, which I phoned or telegraphed back. So it was business as well as pleasure. What was the harm in my sitting next to him and having lunch when he asked me to do so?

I don't know how to describe the exhaustion. Usually we tried to get out of a town by 10:30 or 11:00 at night, but sometimes it was much later, because we always ran late. Estes was shaking hands, and people wanted to talk to him. Meetings were delayed more and more, as the day passed. So we would get on the plane around 11:30 p.m. and maybe we'd fly until about 12:30 a.m. These were short hops. It was a big, four-motor plane, so we made good time. So we might get in at 12:30 or 1:00 a.m.





Shirpser: All around the field would be cars with their lights on, welcoming us. Everybody there would be fresh and wanting to talk. They had drinks ready for us in the hotel and would flock into Estes' suite, and they wanted to know what was happening, explained what was going to happen tomorrow. So maybe you would fall into bed at two or three in the morning. This went on night after night. Then there'd be a breakfast meeting, 8:30 or nine o'clock, if you were lucky. Before you went to the breakfast meeting you had to have your suitcase packed, so the bellboy could get it down in the lobby. This meant that you were getting four or five hours sleep a night. You tried to sleep on the plane, of course, but with the talking in front of you, in back of you, sideways, and with the clicking clatter of those typewriters...I even brought earplugs along.

I think that the most valuable thing I did for Estes was to give him a sleepshade. He had never worn one before. I had tranquilizers with me. Every once in a while I would urge him to take one. I said, "Don't talk to anybody. Sleep." He did have a wonderful facility for quick napping on the plane. I also gave him a pair of earplugs. He would settle down with the sleepshade, the earplugs, and sometimes a tranquilizer, and maybe he'd get an hour's sleep. He couldn't have survived without it. Estes was a calm, poised, patient, gentle person. But there comes a point beyond which you can't push a human being.

I think it was Time magazine that said that no one in history had had as strenuous and as hectic a campaign as Estes Kefauver did in 1956 for the vice-presidency. They didn't send him to big cities very often, as those were covered by Adlai.

However, we did meet with Adlai two or three times. In Chicago we had a large joint rally. In Washington, D.C. we had another joint rally. Sometimes we campaigned together for a day. Then we'd separate and the Kefauver group would go to the smaller places, and Adlai would go in the bigger ones--which was right. The president should get the big places, the big television programs. But Estes had lots of television coverage. There was always a press conference. There was always a television program. He did extremely well on television; this was his media. He was best in extemporaneous speeches, extemporaneous answering of questions, and he was always sought for television interviews.



### Some Typical Itineraries and Other Facts

Shirpser: Let me give you a schedule. This one is dated October 23. We arrived at the Willow Run airport in Michigan at 12:45 a.m. We got to the Hotel Statler in Detroit at 1:45 a.m. That means no one got to bed until at least three o'clock. By the time your luggage arrives later, and you take a shower, and people are calling you and you talk and maybe you have a drink together, the night is half gone. They actually did let us wait until ten o'clock the next morning for a press conference which meant probably five hours sleep.

At eleven o'clock we were in Detroit's Thirteenth Congressional District headquarters with Congressman Charles Diggs, Jr. At twelve o'clock we were at the Northwood Inn for luncheon. There was a Business and Professional committee, Eighteenth Congressional District, congressional candidate Paul Sutter, chairman, Carlos Richardson. By 2:15 p.m. we were in a completely different area, Club Supino, a club for retired workers, senior citizens; 2:45 p.m. we were at the Ford Rouge plant, gate number four. Estes met workers who were changing shifts. The congressional candidate was there.

So far that's five meetings from ten o'clock to 2:45 p.m. At 4:45 p.m. we were back at the Statler Hotel for a TV tape. Then at 6:45 p.m. there was a buffet on the thirteenth floor. At 7:55 p.m. we were in another congressional district headquarters--Grand River at Vicksburg, Congressman John Dingle, chairman, Louis McGuiness. At 8:30 p.m. we were at a rally in the Seventeenth Congressional District. That's Grand River for Congresswoman Martha Griffiths, chairman, Alfred Meyers. At ten o'clock we were in the Seventh Congressional District, Carpenters' Hall, East Detroit, congressional candidate, Ira McCoy, chairman, William Hull. At 11:20 p.m. we were at the Wayne airport. That means that we were going without a respite from ten o'clock in the morning until 11:20 p.m.

There were seventeen automobiles in our caravan. Estes was riding with Governor G. Mennen Williams and Senator Pat McNamara in car number four. I was in car seven with Neal Staebler, an old friend, who was the chairman of the Michigan State Central Committee, and two other people whose positions I've forgotten. This is time-consuming, too, to get seventeen cars parked. Of course they drop you right at the door of wherever you are going, but you have to wait to be picked up



Shirpser: again. Remember, we had gotten into bed at three the previous morning. We had attended a press conference at ten. Sometimes the press would ask questions of me or Myrtle or Mabelle. They would want to know, "What are you doing?" "Who are you meeting?" "Do you set up women's committee meetings?"

When you had ten meetings in one day in different parts of Detroit, sometimes in the suburbs, believe me, when you get on the plane at 11:20 p.m., you are ready to fall on your face.

Some of the people who were along with us in the plane that time were:

Howard McGrath, co-chairman, Advisory and Executive  
Committee for Stevenson-Kefauver Campaign  
(I was also co-chairman)

Charles Tyroler, II, director of the campaign trip  
Myrtle McIntyre, deputy chairman, Volunteers for  
Stevenson-Kefauver

Richard Wallace, Estes administrative assistant  
and press secretary

Then we had assistant press secretaries, assistant secretaries, typists. We had Colonel Roberts who was on the Kefauver Advisory Executive Committee for finance. Dr. David Hill who was in the car with me that time--he was special advisor. We had a labor representative aboard, whose name was Del Garst.

Then, here's the press:

Peter, Lumpa, Baltimore Sun  
Richard Amper, New York Times  
Robert Lewis, Farmers Union Newsletter

(You know Estes was very popular with the farmers because of his stand on farm support.)

Tom Foley, I.N.D.  
Barney Livingstone, Associated Press  
John Rous, Associated Press Photographer  
Phil Warden, Chicago Tribune  
Paul Southwick, United Press  
Richard Lyons, Washington Post  
Herb Kaplow, N.B.C. (I got to know him well.  
He's a delightful person.)



Shirpsr:

Joe Hatcher, Nashville Tennessean  
 Robert Walsh, Washington Star  
 Clark Mollenhoff, Des Moines Register  
 David Thomas, Life Magazine  
 Francis Miller, Life photographer  
 Paul Healy, New York Daily News  
 Ruth Montgomery, Syndicated Columnist

That's a good press representation. In California campaigning, we always had a big press group and we almost always had Time magazine with us. They didn't happen to be on this flight with us. Also U.S. News and World Report were often with us.

I have another itinerary. This one left Washington, D.C. at three o'clock in the afternoon. We arrived at Findley, Ohio. Mike Di Salle was there to meet us. After a meeting in Findley we went to Reno, Ohio. We stayed overnight at the Bar Hotel. Then we started out the next day with an 8:30 a.m. meeting. That was after our 7:30 a.m. breakfast.

Then we went by auto to Ottawa, Ohio. We had a rally on the courthouse steps. Then we went to Mansville, Ohio, and we had an airport rally there, then Columbus, Ohio. We flew from Findley airport to Columbus, Ohio. We often had rallies at the airport. People would come out to a rally at an airport when we didn't have time to come into town.

We stayed at the Southern Hotel, had a big dinner meeting there. Then we went to Columbus airport to go to Camden. There we went to a high school for a big rally and meeting. We've had eight meetings so far that day. Then we went to Canton airport, Champagne, Illinois, and there we had another meeting. We stayed overnight there. The next morning we had a rally at the University of Illinois. Then we went to Decatur, Illinois. Then we went to Stevenson-Kefauver headquarters for pictures and meetings; on to the Orlando Hotel for luncheon, followed by a speech and rally at a public park, a block and a half from the hotel; then by auto to Bloomington, Illinois. Then we went to Peoria by car. We stayed overnight there, at the Pere Marquette Hotel. Rally and speech, Spaulding Institute Gymnasium that night. Then we went to Battle Creek.

That's the way the days went. Eight, nine, ten meetings, on and on. We then went to Boston next on this tour. We had a breakfast of volunteer ladies--I remember I spoke at that. Then we had a press conference at Boston University, and so on.





Shirpsr: We often did things like this: We went to the GE plant gate when there was a shift change and Estes would stand there shaking hands for an hour. Sometimes there would be rain, and the wind would blow, or it would be snowing. When we had these outdoor rallies--women didn't wear pantsuits in those days--when you got up, your feet were so numb you could hardly stand. Even though you wore warm coats and had them bundled around you, you couldn't put a blanket over your legs. The wind would just whistle around and through you.

I don't know how anyone survived those campaigns. As I think back, I just don't know how I had that much stamina. You really have to believe in the worth of what you are doing and in your candidates, and I surely did.

I haven't told you about Pennsylvania. Scenically I loved that part of the trip the most. There were these big red hip-shaped barns. You could look in and see the tobacco drying in the lofts. There were hump-backed bridges that climbed up and down. I was told the things--native to that area--to eat. The press would say, "Have you tried the shoe-fly pie?"--and other things I wasn't used to eating. It was really fun and people there were very friendly and informal. The beauty of the countryside was breathtaking. We were there about November 1 which is way past the usual date for the vivid colors of the leaves. When somebody told me it was way past its prime I knew I had to go there sometime in prime time. Ad and I did have a week in the New England states, later. It was wonderful.

We were in Wisconsin on that trip, then in Minnesota where I had many friends. Cora Knudson, congresswoman from Minnesota, was a very good friend of mine, also the national committee members there.

Then we went back to Washington, D.C.

Chall: What happened in Chicago?

Shirpsr: The Stevenson and Kefauver campaigns met together in Chicago. There was to be an enormous rally and Estes' and Adlai's campaigns were joined for two days.

Estes came to where Martha Ragland and I were visiting. He said, "Adlai wants you to come down and see him." We said, "We'd be delighted to go." So we went down to his suite and we had a good visit with him as well as with Estes. Then, as



Shirpsers: Estes was walking me back to my room he said...This has a preface: Remember I told you about hats, and that young man who said that he remembered about me two years after he heard me speak, and I was thinking, "Oh, this is just fine. I must have impressed him with what I said." But he remembered I was wearing "the cutest hat that he ever saw." So I learned to wear pretty hats.

Just last week [1974] Professor Eric Bellquist came up to me at the U.C. commencement and said, "Why aren't you wearing a hat?" I said, "Women don't wear hats any more." He said, "What I remember best about you was that you wore the prettiest hats I ever saw."

So this story about Adlai and Estes has to do with a hat, too. Ad had to be in New York on business and I had to be in Washington anyway, so we went a few days before the Chicago meeting. I managed to get a couple of days for myself every now and then. I went into Bergdorff's exclusive store in New York. I knew I was going to be busy all through this campaign. I thought, "I'm going to buy a really beautiful hat." I did buy the most expensive and the most beautiful hat I've ever had, which I wore constantly throughout the campaign. So Estes said, "Do you know what Adlai was just telling me about you? Adlai said that you are looking so well in spite of the heavy campaign and he thought you were wearing the most becoming hat."

I thought, "How it humanizes these two men. Here, one is the presidential candidate, the other the vice-presidential candidate. They're exhausted and they sit down together to discuss their problems, and Adlai says that I was "wearing such a becoming hat."

I said to Estes: "What did you say?" He said, "I agreed with him." They were still interested in other things than just politics! I thought that was a good story. And Eric Bellquist having said the same thing to me twenty years later made me think that it's a shame that we don't wear hats any more!

Chall: They say organizations raise money now by raffling off people's hats.

Shirpsers: I gave all of mine to Herrick Hospital. We have a thrift shop there. Did I tell you that Estes sent me his original coonskin cap, in a big, satin-lined box? This huge package arrived. I had hysterics when I opened it and saw that hated coonskin cap.



Shirpser: Then the hospital was having a big auction benefit. So I gave them Estes' coonskin cap in that lavish box, and somebody paid \$100 for it. So I don't have it any more, and it's a shame. I should have kept it. I really regret having given it up.

### The Press Joins in the Fun and Hard Work

Shirpser: An amusing incident happened when we were aboard the plane. We got a wire from Senator O'Mahoney in Wyoming. He wanted us to stop en route and to campaign for him. He was having a very tough contest and Estes always drew big crowds. We already had a crowded schedule. But Estes said, "I can't turn him down. He's one of my best friends. He has always been cooperative." We were going to Idaho, too, to help Frank Church campaign for U.S. Senator.

In his own campaign for vice-president, Estes was especially wanted in all of these other campaign contests, because he met people so well, and he would speak so highly of the candidate and he always drew big crowds. Everybody wanted him. Naturally this was one of his objectives to elect other senators and congressmen. So we did a lot of that kind of campaigning.

Estes told the pilot we had to stop at Little Rock Springs, Wyoming. The pilot said, "I hope the field is big enough, because you know we've got an awfully big plane here." So he did get us down and everyone was clapping. Then I'm going to tell you the story by a song that the press wrote that night. It was an awfully funny song. It was called "No Steps at All." This is the way it goes:

"Come all ye people and listen to me  
While I tell you of the senator from Tennessee  
He campaigned by copter and many odd things  
But the strangest of all came in Little Rock Springs.

(Chorus) Slide, Estes, slide  
Slide, Estes, slide  
You'll coast into office  
So slide, Estes, slide.

The moment we landed we looked toward the door  
No one thought our exit entailed any chore.



Shirpsen: We looked for a stairway, no stairway was found.  
We looked for a ladder, there was none around.

(Chorus) Slide, Estes, slide  
Slide, Estes, slide  
You'll coast into office  
So slide, Estes, slide.

Then came our cute Joan Perrin (stewardess) who stepped  
into the breach  
She said, "If the concrete you're anxious to reach,  
The quickest way of all, and the best to boot  
Is simply to go down the emergency chute.

(Chorus)

The problem was weighty and one could not scoff  
Considering the size of Clark Mollenhoff.

(Clark went on to be news secretary for Nixon. He was a huge man.)

They slid down this plastic, alack and alas  
They warmed up what best might be called their great mass.

(Chorus)

Then Clara and Mabelle each clutching their dress,  
"No pictures, boys, please," they said, "please stop the press."  
Now this was the climax of our hectic day  
We think our advance man had planned it that way.

(Chorus)

So down went McGinty and down went McGrath  
And finally Estes came down the same path.  
He grinned as he landed, and then his next crack,  
Was, "Now how in the Hell are we going to get back?"

(Chorus)

This is the moral that we would impart  
A man may be running ahead at the start  
Though often ahead he sometimes may find  
He may have to count on his sliding behind."





Shirpser: This is what happened. When we got to the door Mabelle and I were watching the press go down head over heels. The emergency chute is just a piece of plastic that's fastened with three hooks at the top. It's held at the bottom by one person on each side, and it flaps up and down in the middle. So you get on it, and you go sideways, and you go head over heels. Some of these men were doing somersaults on the way down.

I said, "I'm not going down that thing." And Estes said, "Yes, you are." I said, "I won't do down. I'm not going to go down with television cameras on. Nobody is going to take a picture of me with my dress pulled up around my neck." He said, "You've got to go down, Clara. They are all waiting. You've got to go down." So I leaned out and I said to the cameramen and to the reporters, "Now, look. Do I have your word of honor that you won't take any pictures, because if you do, I'm not leaving the plane." And everybody shouted back, "Word of honor, Clara." We all knew each other quite well by then. So I slid down and fortunately I didn't go head over heels, but I came down sideways with my head first. They grabbed me and pulled me up. When we looked back the plane seemed at least three stories high. It's awfully big and I wondered what in the world we were going to do to board it again.

When we got back that night, they had worked out a series of a ladder and a platform and a ladder and a platform, and a ladder and a platform. Somebody would stand on the platform and help you up the ladder. It wasn't fastened and it wobbled. If you looked down, you'd have to fall. "Look straight ahead. Don't look down. Don't look sideways." It was terribly risky.

Of course, Estes is so tall that he didn't have far to slide down that emergency chute. Here's a picture of him. There are the stewardesses leaning out of the door. They adored him. He came down in good style. He was so tall he didn't have to worry about rolling head over heels.

We lived on that story for weeks. The press made a terrific story of it. We told the story in Wyoming, got good publicity for Estes and Senator O'Mahoney, too.

We got some other funny songs.

This one talks about Muskogee; Muskogee in Oklahoma.



Shirpser: On top of Muskogee, one mile in the air  
 We felt a bit lopy and had dust in our hair  
 We reached Oklahoma, we'd been on the go  
 Our Convair just made it at Pe-a-bo-lo.  
 We had a box dinner, some barbecued meat  
 We'll all get much thinner than if we stopped to eat.  
 So rev up the motors, balance the wings  
 Little people are voters, so give thanks for small  
 things.  
 Be grateful for Presley and barbecued beef  
 And last but not Leslie, be grateful for Keef.

They always used to call him Keef, instead of Estes. Here's  
 one called "The Man from Tennessee." It was written by a  
 supporter in Idaho.

We favor Kefauver, the man from Tennessee  
 We favor Kefauver, yes, he's the man for me.  
 A statesman and a gentleman, our president will be  
 We favor Kefauver, the man from Tennessee.

Chall: Did the press always make these up?

Shirpser: No, this was someone in Coeur d'Alene in Idaho. This one is by  
 Herbert Baker. This one by Johnny Green was sung to the tune of  
 "Yellow Rose of Texas."

Vote for Adlai, vote for Estes  
 They're for you and you and you  
 They're for all people and not for just a few.

This one is kind of funny about the "Keefenpoof" song, instead  
 of "Whiffenpoof."

From the Keef's backyard to Fresno  
 Through the mist of Kalispel  
 Past a hundred bars we longed to know so well  
 Seeing the Keefenpoofs assemble with the drinking  
 cups on high  
 It is tragic, but campaigning can be Hell.  
 We are too long aloft both night and day  
 Baa, Baa, Baa  
 Flying high. You can't go astray  
 Baa, Baa, Baa  
 Up in the air, no time for a spree  
 Too fast a pace for any immorality.  
 But just give us one hour in old D.C.  
 Baa, baa, baa.



Shirpser: The reporters on our plane wrote that one, too. Some of them are really funny. And we often sang on the plane when we couldn't keep awake any other way, and when it was a short flight. They'd hand these mimeographed song sheets to us and we'd all sing together and laugh about it, especially the new songs recently written by the reporters.

Chall: The press becomes a close-knit part of the campaign.

Shirpser: You have to watch it though, because once toward the end of the [primary] campaign (I told you how the press kept warning me that Estes was going to lose), three of the national press asked me to have cocktails with them. They wanted to talk to me. They spent their time, instead of asking me questions, pleading with me to get on the Stevenson slate as fast as possible. They knew Estes was going to lose.

These were national press people who thought I had done a good job and wanted me to pick up the pieces of my career and not stay with Estes any more. They knew that I had given up my political career for him. Now, they urged me to think of myself and go on to the Stevenson delegation.

I said to them, "I don't accept that. I'm working for Estes to win." They said, "You're saying that, but we know you know he can't win. Will you go on the Stevenson slate?" I said, "Of course, if Estes withdraws. If he ever decides to withdraw, I will gladly support Stevenson."

So it got into a press article.

Chall: Without the "if Estes withdraws."

Shirpser: Estes was quite annoyed with me. He said, "You really have to be more careful with the press." I explained to him what had happened, that I had kept telling them that Estes was going to win and that I wouldn't accept the fact that they thought he would lose. But they kept urging me to go onto the Stevenson slate, and I finally said, "Surely, if Estes does withdraw, if he can't win, that's where I'd find it very congenial to be."

Estes understood, but I learned that I had to be more careful. If you get too friendly, are too "palsy" with them, sometimes you can get in hot water, as I did then. They were really trying to be nice to me. I noticed that someone from U.P. was on our plane. We were speaking of how that unauthorized



Shirpser: story got in the press where "Clara Shirpser announces Kefauver withdrawal." There were U.P. people with us most of the time. We got to be good friends. And I think it might have been that somebody thought they were doing me a favor. Because I never was able to trace it. I never could find out.

Chall: What were Kefauver's relations with the press?

Shirpser: Very good. He never refused to talk with them. He always was frank. Even when they complained, as you see some of these songs do about the poor food and "we're flying too long and too hard, and it's too rough." Some of them said they just dreaded coming on the Kefauver plane because they knew they were going to work ten times as hard as they would with anybody else. They didn't dare not come along on every stop, because he might say something that was different or an incident that was newsworthy might occur, so they had to be along. It was so exhausting they changed crews once every week.

Chall: Do they send people, let's say, from the Nixon-Eisenhower campaign to the Kefauver campaign?

Shirpser: Yes, it might well be. I remember when we did that whistle-stop train tour with Adlai Stevenson. That was the first one he'd ever undertaken. I told you, I think, that some of the campaign officials got together afterwards with the press and they would speak to us. We almost always had to stop the train to pick up the stragglers, because Ike gave a stereotyped speech which was practically the same thing every time. They didn't even leave the train. They just used the material that was handed them. But where Adlai spoke so extemporaneously they had to be out there and they wanted to be out there. They wanted to mingle with the crowd and get the reaction.

So many of those people on the Kefauver plane had been the same people that traveled with other campaigns. It's a good thing they do that, because they bring the experience of other campaigns and very often they had hints for us about the issues that were the most popular, and what was good to emphasize. So it was valuable to us to have the press confer with us. No one, of course, is as well informed as a good reporter. It was very helpful to know what they were thinking.

This was the press release when the national Stevenson-Kefauver campaign headquarters in Washington announced "J. Joseph Donohue, deputy campaign manager in charge of the vice-presidential





Shirpser: campaign, announced the appointment of J. Howard McGrath, former attorney general of the United States." He had also been chairman of the Democratic National Committee. I believe he had been a governor and senator. So he had a wonderful background. They also announced that I was to be co-chairman of the executive and advisory committee with Howard McGrath and Jiggs Donohue. Reporters interviewed me and I said I was honored to serve as co-chairman with such distinguished Democrats as Jiggs Donohue and Howard McGrath.

Reading from the press article: "Mrs. Shirpser said, 'I am proud to actively participate in the campaign of Governor Stevenson, who is blueprinting a new and better United States. His is the eloquent voice of the aspirations of our people. In Adlai Stevenson and Estes Kefauver, I'm convinced that, in perhaps the only time in political history, a major political party is presenting to the electorate its two greatest statesmen.'"

I think that is true. I don't remember a time when two presidential contenders had been placed together on the ticket. Then I said that I had discussed this new post with Senator Kefauver when he was recently in the California and in the Los Angeles area. He had already told me that they were going to do this. The nature of this committee's work is to consult with and to advise the campaign management on matters of policy and strategy in the vice-presidential campaign, and that I would be spending a good deal of time between now and election time, in Washington, in campaign headquarters, and also traveling with the vice-presidential candidate.

#### Clara's Other Responsibilities

Shirpser: I wrote Howard McGrath a very cordial letter and said how glad I was to be working with him again. I told him some of the things I had been doing in a report to him: that I was meeting Estes in Sacramento on the twentieth and would join the tour which would eventually end in Washington. This was the second national tour in which I joined the campaign. Estes said he thought he would want me in Washington for some conferences. I also said a lot of press people who had been on the plane with us said that when I was in Washington they wanted to interview me. Several of them had come up to me and congratulated me on my new appointment. I thought I might get some publicity for the



Shirpsen: campaign that way.

I told him I had given Bill Blair (who was Adlai's executive assistant) my copy of the Nixon Restrictive Covenants which he had signed both in his hometown of Whittier, California, and in Washington, D.C. I thought that it had tremendous vote-getting potentialities from the inquiries that have come to me, personally. I checked with Estes. He told me that he had not signed a similar covenant. So since he is in the clear I hoped we could use this important material. "Richard Richards is our candidate for the United States Senate and I hope that he has an excellent chance of winning. He is doing a statewide broadcast this coming Monday called The Case Against Nixon and he wants to use my copy of the restrictive Covenant also." I said, "If you want to confer with Bill Blair on this I can send you two copies." Then I said, "This seems especially important since Nixon's pious and hypocritical pleas to Californians not to show racial bias against Dr. Sammy Lee, as they did earlier this year in refusing to sell him a home in Garden Grove, California. Here is Nixon pleading with people not to show racial bias when he himself signed a covenant that no one who is non-Caucasian can live in his home except as domestic servants."

Then I spoke of a luncheon for Mrs. Eugenia Anderson, our ambassador to Norway, honoring Mrs. Edison Dick, whom I knew well, was chairman of Adlai's women's division, Mrs. Oscar Chapman, and Katie Louchheim. I was asked to be chairman of that luncheon. The local leaders wanted me, and I was pleased to be asked.

So I set up a press conference for them and a tea in San Francisco, as well as the luncheon, which was in Oakland.

Then I told him that I was a hostess at a reception recently for Governors Leader and Meyner, Senators Gore and Humphrey. Governor Leader was especially cordial, congratulated me on my new appointment, and invited me to come to Pennsylvania and campaign there. Then I told him I had been serving as member of the northern finance committee for the Stevenson-Kefauver campaign, which is headed by Ed Heller and Ben Swig. And I've raised over \$2200 so far, and have good reliable pledges for about \$1000 more.

I also told him we were setting up "Dollars for Democrats Day," October 16. "I had been asked to start the campaign by ringing doorbells for publicity purposes with a group of our



Shirpser: candidates in the East Bay. I was giving a large women's tea at my home to kick off a series of Democratic women's teas for fund-raising purposes. I've been invited to speak at a large number of local groups. I've done so wherever I've been asked.

"I will culminate my local activities with another affair at my home. And then I will be ready to assist you in every way in which you think I can be helpful.

"I have reported at this length because I haven't been in communication with you or Jiggs for some time. I wanted you to know I have been working as wholeheartedly and as effectively as I know how, here in California to bring about unity in our party (which was badly needed) and for our great candidates' victory."

This letter reminded me of all the activities I had been doing.

Chall: Can you reconstruct or remember what kinds of strategy or policy meetings you were part of in this campaign?

Shirpser: I felt that I was being given every bit of consideration possible. I recognized that in the heat of the campaign nobody is going to phone and say, "Will you come to Washington? We want to decide a policy matter?" We were trying to discuss while we were together on plane trips whatever the situation seemed to warrant. They were very frank with me, and they listened to problems I was having. We tried to discuss national policy, the issues we needed to emphasize more, how to get Estes on television more often because that's where we thought he was so effective. (And he usually was on TV in every place we went.) It was mostly a question of strategy and policy, what was currently happening. We often conferred by telephone, too. I was very closely associated with both of them. It was a friendly sort of relationship.

When you work with qualified and experienced people who are accustomed to delegate responsibility, they welcome suggestions. They welcome new ideas. They don't try to suppress something because they didn't think of it first. This is why at the national level the pleasure of working with someone who is capable is so greatly accelerated. All of us were trying to work for a common objective. They knew that's what I really was trying to do, and made me feel that I was of some value, and that gave me encouragement and support.



### Meshing Campaign Strategies and Issues

Chall: How did the Kefauver staff get along with the Stevenson people? Was it the Stevenson group that was really managing the total campaign? Were they privy to the general strategy overall or did each candidate have his own way to go?

Shirpser: I think they cooperated very closely on issues and mostly agreed on scheduling. Later on, I want to talk about one issue which was not a popular issue but an issue on which they were both so right. It has been proven just this last week.

Basically, I think, they shared the same principles, the same objectives. I think Estes was more liberal on civil rights and a little bolder in speaking out where he believed he was right. Stevenson, on the other hand, made the high-level statesman-like great addresses which inspired people. They seemed to work together very cooperatively. I sometimes heard rumors of their not getting along. Nothing Estes said to me ever gave me that idea. Nothing Adlai said to me gave me that idea, either.

Chall: And their campaign people got along? McGrath and Donohue and Bill Blair?

Shirpser: I think so. Obviously, nothing is ideal, and sometimes we thought Estes was given too many small villages and little towns where he might have done better in some of the bigger cities. But our campaigns did come together at intervals. Frank discussions were held.

Estes is not a person who demands a great deal. I think he preferred to run his own campaign independently as much as he could, and McGrath and Donohue went along with that. Of course he had great respect and admiration for Adlai. The fact that he worked so hard indicated how much he wanted victory.

### International Issues Contribute to Defeat

Shirpser: Both Adlai and Estes stressed issues very strongly in their campaigns. And one of the ones they were completely agreed upon, which each used individually, was the importance of conferring with Russia to limit nuclear power. They believed that the only





Shirpsen: hope for the world to survive was to end the threat of nuclear war. Always, wherever we were, the press told them that this was a very unpopular issue; that people didn't care that much; that they didn't realize the importance of nuclear power. Remember, this was 1956. They didn't want to hear about "gloom and doom." It gave Nixon, particularly, a chance to use the pro-Russian smear against Adlai.

This is so ironic, isn't it? Here in 1956, these two men who were statesmen, realized the basic importance of stopping the nuclear race, of controlling it, of stopping the tests. They spoke of all this in the strongest terms. Ike ridiculed them and spoke out strongly against this, and Nixon smeared them; and now he has just signed a treaty for that identical issue! And Nixon put his arms around Brezhnev recently.

When Adlai and Estes saw the importance of this issue, and endeavored to warn our people, they were met with ridicule and scorn and condemnation. It's hard to bear the amount of pioneering and criticism that you must often do to finally get an issue accepted by the people.

As to the end of the campaign--the timing of this incident, of the uprising in Hungary and the way Russia invaded Hungary with the most brutal shooting down of people in the streets, tanks, tens of thousands of people murdered and imprisoned... Well, the timing for a candidate to say that you should sit down with Russia became a very bad issue. So whatever strength had been built up by Adlai and Estes (and thinking people did realize the importance of it) you couldn't any longer use this issue effectively. That was one terrible thing that happened toward the end of the campaign.

In this research I've been doing for these interviews, I saw a statement by Eisenhower, as well as a campaign pledge by the Republican party, encouraging people to seek freedom, and pledging that the United States would stand by them in their search for this just freedom to which they were entitled. This was directed at people behind the Iron Curtain. But when Hungary was brutally invaded by Russia, did Ike and the Republican party attempt to go to the aid of Hungary? I don't find any record of it.

Both Adlai and Estes said an incident which greatly damaged their campaign (each individually said this to me) that they thought more than anything else foreclosed their chances of



Shirpser: victory, was Israel's invasion of Egypt. Israel was supported by France and England, and they had successfully invaded Egypt with the objective of opening the Suez Canal which Egypt had illegally closed, in violation of all treaties that had been made that it would always be kept open. Ike leaped into the breach and according to press reports used the most violent language that a president has ever used in dealing with his allies, Britain, France and Israel. He forced them to withdraw.

This happened the last week before the election. Then, you see, you got the slogan, "Ike stopped the war. You cannot change horses in the middle of the stream." I've often wondered about the wisdom of that action. Egyptian President Nasser was cowering in a basement ready to be captured and the Egyptian army had been conquered. The war was really over when Ike jumped into the breach. If he had only allowed Israel, France, and Britain to open the Suez Canal, we might not have had the next war, the terrible Six-Day War, with all the bloodshed and more hatred aroused. Most of that would have been resolved if Ike had just stayed out of it, as he stayed out of Hungary.

If Israel, Britain, and France had held off another two weeks before invading Egypt, there might have been a completely different set of circumstances. In the previous election polls, Adlai and Estes were gaining steadily. All of these crises wrecked the Democratic campaign, and they lost badly.

I tried to phone both of them on election night. I had their private numbers. It was impossible to get through to them. I don't know what I would have said, anyway, that could have been of comfort, except how deeply I cared.

Chall: Where were you watching this time?

Shirpser: A whole group of friends were gathered. I think we went out to dinner, then went to someone's home to watch the returns on TV. Sue Saroyan said he was with us (when he wrote Estes later), that we had suffered together as we had in '52. We were watching and hoping. So our hopes were badly damaged. It's awfully hard to take.

They had worked so hard and so valiantly. It seemed that men of their stature should have made a better campaign than they were able to do, and that the smear and the character assassination indulged in by Nixon should not have brought



Shirpser: victory. Ike rose above all the issues with just the force of his own personality; the infectious grin; "the father image"; the hero worship; all were too much.

I don't think anyone could have beaten Ike either in 1952 or 1956. I think in other campaigns, at other times, that Adlai could have won, and Estes could have won. At least, that's what I like to think.



XIV THE NEXT FOUR YEARS IN POLITICS, 1956-1960  
(Interview 17, July 10, 1973)

Shirpser: We were talking about Alice Paul and the Equal Rights Amendment. Going through records, I came across two letters and a wire in which I thought you might be interested. This one is dated December 27. I can't find the year. She telegraphed me, and it must have been around 1956, because I was still living next door, where this was addressed. She said, "Amendment favorably reported at opening of Senate Judiciary Committee this morning. Will be put on Senate calendar immediately. Kefauver, O'Mahoney and Knowland" (that's quite a combination) "all took leadership. Deepest gratitude to you for all you have done. I believe your aid was one of the chief factors in victory."

That pleased me very much because I had testified before a congressional committee on equal rights for women, the Equal Rights Amendment. It was the platform committee before the 1956 convention. Mrs. Emma Guffey Miller had asked me to do this. She was the long time valiant leader for equal rights for women. I had spoken to Senator Kefauver about it. He had always voted favorably on this issue. He said he would introduce the amendment and gather all the support he could. So I do feel I had a part in it, way back then when it wasn't popular at all.

Then I have a letter from Emmy Guffey Miller, from Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania. She was really the grand lady of the Equal Rights Amendment, the daughter of the former governor of Pennsylvania. She was a national committeewoman from Pennsylvania. Quite elderly, even in '56, she has since passed away. But she devoted most of her life to this cause. She believed in it fervently. It was she, I think, who asked me to go before this the platform committee. She asked me to get Senator Kefauver's voting record on this and it went clear back to 1950 when he sponsored an amendment to eliminate discrimination against women





Shirpser: on the basis of sex, and to set up a commission to investigate discrimination against women's rights.

Mrs. Miller thanked me very warmly for what I had done; that was March 9, 1956. On May 1, 1956, I responded to Miss Paul's letter, writing how deeply appreciative I was of what she said, and that I was glad I could be of assistance in this important objective of getting equal rights for women. Then I told her I was working with my California congressmen to secure a favorable response from them. I wrote that Representatives Engle, Shelley, Miller, and King are Stevenson delegates and Congressman Holifield is still uncommitted. As I remember, they all went along, in supporting the Equal Rights Amendment.

#### Democratic Party Responsibilities After the Campaign

Shirpser: Perhaps we ought to get into what happened after I stopped being national committeewoman when the election was over in '56. My recollections are that I was quite unhappy. I was asked to be on Democratic finance committees. They weren't important committees. They were fund raising, always, and occasionally, an executive committee of a candidate. I know I was on Pat Brown's executive campaign committee for governor, and Alan Cranston's for senator and Jeff Cohelan's for congressman in my district. But in strategy and policy meetings of the California Democratic party, in which I felt I had some experience that could be valuable, I usually was not included. And this hurt me very deeply. I think it went back to some of the so-called Democratic "leaders" who continued to resent the fact that I supported Estes Kefauver in the presidential primary in 1956.

There were many slights. I don't know whether I spoke of the big regional dinner in San Francisco where I was put at a table way over at the side of the room (where the friends at my table could hardly see or hear), instead of in the center where Ellie Heller had her table, and Lucretia Grady had her table. Both of them were introduced by the chairman as former Democratic National Committeewomen for California, and I was not introduced. I had been the most recent national committeewoman. Of course, I didn't resent the fact that the others were introduced first, but surely they should not have ignored me. Many friends, noting this omission, sent notes up to the head table. Libby Smith sat there, got a note reminding her, but she did not rise to her feet,



Shirpser: as I would have done in her position, and said, "Mr. Chairman, you have omitted a former national committeewoman who is in the audience, and has filled a table for this dinner."

I would have certainly thought it was my responsibility as Democratic National Committeewoman to correct such an insulting omission. Senator Hubert Humphrey, an old and dear friend, was the speaker at that dinner, and he came right over to me after the dinner and told me how sorry he was; how much he resented this insulting treatment of me, and that he had almost gotten to his feet to say that himself at the head table. Then he decided that this would be interference on his part, and it would be resented.

Libby Smith came over to me after the dinner. I was told later by several friends that they had told her how much they resented the public humiliation of me, and that she should have corrected this. Libby apologized, but I'm afraid I was not gracious in accepting it.

This sort of thing happened to me often. It was painful and humiliating.

I was also on Phil Burton's campaign committee when he ran for Congress. I think I told you his wife Sala, was one of my best volunteers. I was on the executive committee for Alameda County for Hubert Humphrey for president.

Chall: In '60 I understand there were no primaries here in this state.

Shirpser: California went as an uncommitted delegation to the convention in 1960. I was chairman for the East Bay "Women for Johnson-Humphrey" in the [1964] campaign.

I was active in Stanley Mosk's campaign for attorney general.

Chall: Did you retain some kind of seat on the State Central Committee? You were never reappointed to it?

Shirpser: No.

I have letters expressing praise and heartfelt thanks from Stanley Mosk. He said victory wouldn't have been achieved without my help, and that my assistance and encouragement meant so much to him.



Chall: What's the date of that?

Shirpser: The first one is June 1958, which must have been after the primary and the other one was November 24, which must have been after the general election.

Stanley Mosk as attorney general then became Democratic National Committeeman. On the National Committee there were several governors, attorney generals, and United States senators. So it's not uncommon that someone in a statewide office also is national committeeman.

Chall: Are we going to talk more about the 1958 campaign?

Shirpser: In 1957 Estes was in California a couple of times. He often thought of California as his second state. He received so many invitations to come here. He almost always responded, because there was usually someone running for office who needed him as the focal point for a big dinner to raise funds and for good campaign publicity. Every time he came, he always wired me, and asked me to meet him wherever he was; and then I traveled with him, and his secretary, and his press secretary all around the state. This was balm to me because I felt so out of things, the things that I enjoyed doing, and where I felt I was contributing something. When I was with Estes I recaptured a sense of accomplishment.

When Adlai came, which he did several times, I was always called by him or by Bill Blair, and told where they were going, and invited to participate. I always had a private visit with him, and several times I accompanied him in what he was doing.

Those were the things that compensated: that I had kept good friends at the national level who cared about me still, and thought what I was doing was worthwhile.

Chall: I did see a few letters from both men that came in after '56. One of them from Estes Kefauver was discussing the debt from his own campaign. How did he manage to pay it off? Did you help him with that?

Shirpser: Yes, I did. He was probably working eighteen hours a day. In addition to his own Senate commitments (he was one of the hardest-working senators I ever knew), he made many speeches. He was often invited by labor organizations. They pay a fee. I arranged a speaking engagement a couple of times for senators who were



Shirpser: here, for Hubert Humphrey who was also making up a campaign debt. Labor councils, or the state organization, often called me and asked me who I would suggest. I would say that they had campaign deficits to make up, and would they receive a fee? I was told that they would. A couple of times they had last-minute disappointments and they turned to me. I always cleared it with Libby first. I didn't want to have her feel I was stepping in and usurping her prerogatives. For things like this, she didn't seem to mind. I have a letter from Hubert Humphrey in which he thanked me fervently, because he really needed friends then. Estes did, too.

Then, of course, Estes wrote a lot of articles for magazines. He was often asked to do this. When he did travel, of course his travel expenses were paid. I can't say too often how evil it is that the power of money becomes so important in political campaigns. With campaigns costing more each year, sometimes the finest men can't run, because they do not have sufficient funds.

Every time I had an opportunity I testified and gave evidence as to all the ways the campaign finance laws were being broken. But it wasn't until quite recently that they have strengthened the campaign financing laws. It has been a terrible deterrent for qualified candidates who don't have a lot of money, or who aren't willing to be controlled after they win by the few people that contribute large sums.

There are some amusing parts in the letter I wrote to Estes in January, 1958, when we had been away on vacation. I told him how much the trip turned out to be nostalgic, because there was the Fresno CDC convention at which I had been asked to speak again. The Clubs hadn't forgotten me. I enjoyed a close contact with them. I told Estes that I remembered having met him at the Fresno airport in 1956, and had to tell him the bad news that about eighty percent of the CDC convention delegates were signed up for Adlai. "I urged you to discard your prepared speech and give them a strong, liberal fighting address, and you did this extemporaneously and wonderfully well and gained a deserved triumph." So many delegates at that 1958 CDC convention came up to me and remembered that, and talked to me about it. So this made me feel good and I was glad to tell Estes about it.





The CDC Convention, 1958

Shirpser: Do you want some details of what happened at that convention in '58, about Clair Engle?

Chall: Yes. Wasn't this one of the most important of the CDC? Clair Engle and Peter Odegard, wasn't it?

Shirpser: I explained to Estes what happened here. Clair Engle was running. I liked him very much and I thought he had been a good congressman on the whole. But the CDC was very liberal. I mentioned some of Clair Engle's voting record, of which the CDC did not approve. One was that he voted for the Taft-Hartley bill, and for importation of Mexican farm labor. And he had made speeches recently to drop the 160-acre limitation on water. His stand on water and power was not liked by California. And he tried to take away some of the water of Hetch-Hetchy from San Francisco. I hadn't realized that he had been so conservative up to '58. He did change to a more liberal stance after that.

Many labor groups and liberals urged Odegard to make the race, but he didn't decide to do so until a few weeks before that convention. I said that from my point of view this made a terrible problem, because I previously had intended to support Clair Engle. I had worked with him often, and he expected me to support him. And with the clubs I did have influence, even in '58. But Peter Odegard was one of my closest friends and neighbors and had always given me so much help and support. So I finally--knowing me, you can guess who I finally went with--Peter Odegard. I'm sure that didn't make Clair happy.

Chall: Generally when you give your word you keep it.

Shirpser: No, I hadn't really pledged myself to Clair. I had always liked him and worked well with him, and thought that I would support him before Peter Odegard decided to contest. But I didn't break my word. I went to see Clair Engle and talked with him about it. I explained that Peter was right here in my neighborhood, my staunch and dear friend that we were in complete agreement on basic issues, and that I had to be loyal to him. You know, loyalty has always been very important to me.

At any rate, Peter was making a very strong race. Pat Brown told me later that Peter would have won if he had started two or three weeks earlier, because the bandwagon had really



Shirpsen: started rolling for Peter. He was well liked by the clubs. He had helped to organize them, too.

What happened was: Kenneth Hahn was also running for the Senate. He was a member of the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County. He told Peter that he (Kenneth) was third on the ballot, and if he were weaker than he expected, he would switch to Peter. But he rolled up a very small vote, so his support didn't mean much.

As the voting continued Peter saw that it would be best for him to withdraw, and to make it unanimous for Clair Engle. I think Peter came out of it with high esteem on the part of the delegates to the convention, because he made a very fine speech pledging to support Clair. Ultimately, Tom Carrell tried to run too, but he made a poor showing.

Chall: Did Dewey Anderson try at this convention too?

Shirpsen: I don't have any notes on that. But there was a very surprising situation on another contest. John Anson Ford decided he wanted to be chairman of the district clubs in his area; and a young Mexican-American, Hank Lopez, beat John Anson Ford. I said to Estes: "Hank is an eloquent, appealing person, and I think the delegates were fed-up at that point with some of the candidates they had been pressured to endorse, and maybe they decided to show their independence at that particular point. Lopez was a young man and John Anson Ford was much older. It was a bitter blow for John to be defeated by Lopez, who was not well known nor experienced.

I went up and congratulated Clair Engle immediately after his nomination, and I was glad that he wasn't angry at me. I don't think he ever thought Peter was a real threat, anyway. He told me that he was going to ask Estes to come to California and campaign for him, especially in the Valley. Clair asked me to urge Estes to come, and of course, I was glad to do so. So that was one of the times Estes was in California and that I was with him, and working to help Clair Engle's victory.

Then I wrote, "The rumor was being spread there that Paul Ziffren would like to seek the national chairman's post if Butler gives it up." I told Estes in strong language what I thought that situation would be. Then I wrote to Estes, "We drove to Los Angeles, stayed at The Ambassador Hotel." (That's where Estes always stayed when he had his meetings down there, and I stayed there, too, with his traveling group.) I said,



Shirpser: "Again I had many happy memories of the Kefauver campaign."

I wrote, further, "In Reno we went to a restaurant for dinner. "The Tennessee Waltz" was being played. So Ad and I danced to it. So you see I keep getting reminders of you all the time, and missing you."

Then I asked him if he would be interested in being interviewed by KPFA. Harold Winkler, whom I knew well, was the former professor of economics at Cal. He was president of KPFA. And Estes was interviewed at KPFA on his next visit. So I was delighted that we could arrange that. It was sort of a question-answer session, like a press conference. That was Estes' best media: television, with extemporaneous questions.

Once in awhile, I had opportunities to do things because of previous connections and I was always happy when I could.

#### Reviewing Correspondence and Other Activities

Shirpser: I think I must have about 150 letters from Estes. We kept in touch all the time. Wherever he was, he wrote to me. They go through all of '57, '58.

Chall: We should put them in The Bancroft Library so people can see how he was relating to the issues and to you.

Shirpser: I was in Washington in 1958. I've forgotten just why we went, but I have some notes about being entertained. I know Nancy and Estes gave a party for us, and Bill Blair did, too. At a later time, I've forgotten the exact date, but Bill Blair then was head of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and he lived in a beautiful home. He was married to a beautiful woman, Deeda, and they had a son. Their spacious home and gardens were truly beautiful. His study was lined...I have two small walls of pictures, Bill had four large walls lined with photos of candidates, especially of Adlai, of course. We kept saying, "Remember what happened here? Remember what happened there?" The photographs of places (and of people) I had been with them brought such nostalgic memories, because Bill was closer to Adlai than anyone in the world.



Shirpser: India Edwards entertained us and Katie Louchheim, too. We still had lots of friends there. It was so much fun to be welcomed so warmly, especially after the rough treatment I was having around here.

Then I have some letters from Lyndon Johnson and Ladybird.

Chall: When do they start?

Shirpser: The first one I seem to have is in '55. There are several of them in my scrapbook, too. This letter was during the time that he had a serious illness.

Chall: These are letters in response to yours.

Shirpser: Some were. Also, there were very nice Christmas cards covering several years. And there were personal letters, too. I must admit I didn't keep too many of them. Now, I really wish that I had. He was president of the United States, and I should have. We weren't close, you know, and so unless there was some special reason to keep them, I did not.

I remember he entertained all the National Committee members at breakfast once, a very delicious breakfast. I think that must have been '56 also.

There was a nice letter from Frank Church after he won the U.S. Senate race in '56. He said he knew what a blow the defeat was to me--remember, we had gone there on Estes' campaign schedule to help Frank Church in his campaign, and so I had gotten to know him and his lovely wife quite well. He knew that the defeat of the national ticket was a blow to all of us, and "especially for you who worked so hard in close personal contact with the major candidates, it must have been doubly difficult."

It was!

Here is a picture of me with Estes, that I always liked. There was somebody I didn't like and I cut him out of it. (Lyle Cook!)

Then I have this clipping. On the top of it I wrote, "Awful." I don't know the date, but I expect it was in '58. The wives of the candidates--Mrs. Richard Richards (her husband was running for U.S. Senate), Mrs. Glenn Anderson (for lieutenant governor), Mrs. Stanley Mosk (for attorney general), Mrs. Don Rose (secretary





Shirpsers: of state)--and some of the comments made me realize that the candidates' wives ought to go through a period of indoctrination, too. I'm not going to tell you who said what. But these are some of the wives' comments:

"I don't think people are interested in the opinion of wives, but they are interested in seeing what the candidate is married to." (What the candidate is married to!)

"I don't think it will influence the voters," said another one. "I didn't put on a special dress today just to campaign."

Another one said, "It would be nice if the voters made their choice on issues, but they don't usually. Sometimes they think, 'If that man is married to that nice woman he must be nice, too.'"

Well, I won't read you any more of these superficial remarks. But think how good Mrs. McGovern was; think of Eleanor Roosevelt!

Chall: This was 1958 and maybe in their own way they were telling the truth.

Shirpsers: But they weren't making it any better, were they?

Chall: No, they weren't. And I suppose the reporter was asking those kinds of questions.

Shirpsers: But they could have said something with more significance.

Chall: It shows we've come a long way, though it's taken quite awhile.

Shirpsers: Here are some very cordial letters from Clair Engle in February. Incidentally, Estes wrote me two or three letters telling me that Clair told him that I was being very helpful to him; and Estes asked me to keep it up--he thought Clair was a good man. He would love to see him be senator.

Chall: How did he get along with him when he was senator?

Shirpsers: Very well, I'm sure. Because I used to see Clair Engle after he was in the Senate, when I came to Washington, and he always spoke warmly of Senator Kefauver. Clair and his wife, Lou, had had a dinner party for me.



Shirpsen: I must tell you how he arrived at the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C., where I was staying. While waiting for him in the lobby, I noticed this colorful man, with cowboy boots, and a sombrero, and a typical scarf tie with a large Mexican silver pin, and it turned out to be Senator Clair Engle dressed like a Western cowboy. He loved to use picturesque language, too. He'd say, "Come on, Clara, let's go 'a-spurring' off the cliff," and other "colloquial stuff." He came from farming and mountainous areas in Northern California.

The Engles entertained at a barbecue at their home. I was wearing street clothes. He hadn't told me to dress in Western style as he was doing. I wouldn't have had the right kind of clothes with me, anyway. But I got a kick out of his attire because it was so unexpected. Before that, I had always seen him wearing typical and rather formal senator's clothes.

Chall: This wasn't the usual Clair Engle?

Shirpsen: It was fun to see him that way. And he spoke in this colloquial way all day long, full of picturesque phrases. This is a note I got from him in '58. "Clara, I never got to tell you what a fine speech you made at the Chico Democratic conference; really good. You're doing a swell job."

Also he wrote: "Saw the Keef the other day. He's looking fine. Sends best regards."

This is a letter from Clair after he won the primary, and this is another one after he won the general election. "Without your needed help and assistance my election to the United States Senate would not have been possible."

You receive letters like that, (at the same time you are being ignored and left out of important political committees in California) and they are a comfort.

Chall: What, for example, did you do during the Engle campaign?

Shirpsen: Well, I raised money, for one thing. That was important. I was on his executive committee. I went up to Chico and other areas to help his campaign and to speak in support of Clair. I helped to persuade Estes to come to California at the time he was needed, and participated in handling his schedule in that area.



Shirpser: Everyone knew that I usually handled Estes' schedule whenever he was in town, but Libby Smith did not want me to do this. I did not resent it, because that was her right. As national committeewoman, she was supposed to arrange for speakers, and I had to tell this good friend in Piedmont, who had already asked many people to a cocktail party for Estes Kefauver--to raise funds for the campaign--that I couldn't bring Estes to her home because Libby did not agree to this.

I have a lot of letters from Senator Hubert Humphrey, with whom I worked closely through the years. There is a good photograph. Doesn't he look young there? His were always warm, friendly letters.

Chall: What is the date that they start?

Shirpser: '55 and they go on to '68. There are quite a few of them, too. Whenever he was in town, we always asked him to have cocktails or dinner with us. We worked together when we were trying to find out in '56 who really was going to run for president.

Here it says, "Above all, thanks for the wonderful help in arranging that meeting with the San Francisco Labor Council." (Because they paid good fees and he needed the funds to make up his campaign deficit.)

Hubert wrote that he planned to see Adlai Stevenson and Bill Blair in Chicago and he said (I had written him from Modesto when I was evidently there doing something), "You're on the road again doing that good, effective, hard work for our party. We're proud of you, Clara."

I fear that I'm praising myself too much by reading parts of these letters, but I guess it's because praise from people like Hubert Humphrey meant something to me. He said he would see Adlai and as soon as he knew what Adlai intended to do (this was in '55), "If I am successful in getting an appointment and seeing him I'll let you know right away what he has to say. You'll certainly be cut in on any information that comes to me because we have common responsibilities and want to do our job well."

Chall: So that was prior to the 1956 campaign.



Shirpser: Yes. At that time we didn't know who was going to run. We said that if we learned anything we would tell each other.

Then, here are more letters from Hubert, thanking me after the '64 campaign.

There is a whole series of letters from Senator Alan Cranston which go back to 1953. They were about CDC conventions, and his own campaigns.

Then, I've kept in touch with Senator Stuart Symington. I have quite a few letters from him. He was out here two or three times, campaigning for California candidates and I arranged his schedule. He is very attractive, charming, and witty. Ad and I had some great times with him.

Then there is a series of Gallup polls here, and also an article from the San Francisco News. These go from February to August of '57. There are four different ones, and they all show Estes leading Kennedy for 1960. (Way back in 1957.) "The Keef leads Kennedy in Demo poll on '60 ticket." That was in February, 1957. This one is Chattanooga Times which would naturally be favorable to Estes, August 11, 1957. "Candidates Johnson and Clement run second, third and fourth." Kennedy was close behind Estes but still Estes was ahead: 27% to 23%.

Chall: Where was Stevenson?

Shirpser: At that time, no one expected Stevenson to try it again. He had firmly said he never wanted to run again.

This is the Christian Science Monitor, August 19, which also says that "Senator Kefauver probably holds the lead over any other in the farm states, and he was undefeated in the midwest primaries he entered." They mention his upset victory over Stevenson in Minnesota in 1956.

This one is from Thomas Stokes, Washington Evening Star: "Country boy leads the pack. Kefauver tops Nixon and Kennedy."

So I think it's interesting, that though he was not campaigning in any way, Estes still had these very favorable polls from four different areas of the country.

I picked these as typical, and because I think that should be known.





Shirpser: I haven't spoken nearly often enough of Nancy Kefauver. I was very close to her and I have many letters from her, too. She asked me to come with her to Mare Island Naval Shipyards in Vallejo, in September 15, 1962. She was launching a new submarine called the "Andrew Jackson." I was with her and her party there. We had a reception and buffet supper afterwards at the Mare Island Naval Club. It was an interesting ceremony; I had never been to one before. You know, smashing the champagne bottle against the ship, and so on. We were invited to the commissioned officers' mess, too. That was fun. Ad also came, of course. Nancy always invited me to her home when I was in Washington, and often came to my hotel to have lunch with me there.

I have a letter here from Lionel Steinberg who wanted to be national committeeman in 1960. I would have loved to have had him elected. He was one of the most hard-working and capable people I ever met. He was a very successful farmer and businessman. He had been state president of the Young Democrats. He had always been very helpful to me. He was on the Executive Committee of the State Central Committee. I think he would have been excellent, but he didn't get it. I really tried my best to help him.

One of Estes' bright young men who was on his campaign staff was named William Haddad. Several years later, I received his wedding announcement. His family had come from one of the Middle East countries--Lebanon or Syria. He was an attractive and intelligent young man. I received this invitation. "The Honorable and Mrs. John J. Whitney invites you to the marriage of their daughter, Kate Roosevelt, to Mr. William Frederick Haddad." This was a surprise, and I was delighted, of course, to know about this marriage.

There's a funny cartoon here that Herblock did. This was in 1960. It showed Adlai standing there--a very good cartoon drawing of him, I think--and there's a Democratic donkey kneeling in front of him and Adlai saying, "You go on back now."

There are quite a few clippings about Adlai in 1960. He made a very strong, fighting address at the Virginia University, though he was not a candidate in actuality.

I usually made it a point when somebody I knew well lost an election to write them a note and tell them how much I regretted the defeat. This one happened to be from Governor George Leader



Shirpsen: of Pennsylvania. I have several pictures of him in my scrapbook. I had good contacts with him, always. This is dated November 13, 1958. He was still governor until inauguration the next year. He said, "I appreciate your good wishes and your wonderful note, your loyalty and your support. Most encouraging. However, I know that under Governor Lawrence the good things we started will continue and be expanded. Certainly, the future looks good for Pennsylvania and its citizens." I think that he demonstrated good sportsmanship, having lost the governor's election the previous week. He surely put the best interests of the Democratic party in his state ahead of his own.

This is from Governor-to-be David Lawrence. I wrote and congratulated him after I got George Leader's letter. I had known him in the National Committee.

Here's one from Averell Harriman, thanking me. This was in 1958. "In spite of the outcome of the campaign" (that was probably when he was running for governor of New York), "it means much to me to know that I have such wonderful friends. We lost the battle in New York. We'll continue to work with Butler for the principles of our party which both of us believe in." He was defeated for reelection because the letter comes from the executive chamber in Albany.

This is from Monroe Friedman, who was chairman of the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee. He invites the members of the committee and the presidents of Democratic clubs to a Democratic get-together June 26, 1958, at the Leamington Hotel. At the bottom he wrote, "The fruits of your toil are finally beginning to show." So, in 1958, I really appreciated that.

Chall: It was a good year.

Shirpsen: Yes, it was marvelous. It really was. We did a fine job up and down the state winning the races for U.S. senator, governor, lieutenant governor--all Democrats, and excellent men.

I have a good letter here from Mike Di Salle. We wrote to each other quite often. He won the governor's race in Ohio and I had congratulated him.

This is from Congressman Saund in 1957, saying, "I want you to know that I miss you in the high councils of the Democratic party where I found your work so effective. It's my sincere hope



Shirpser: we can get you back into the harness next year" (which would be '58) "because we're going to need your strength to elect a straight Democratic ticket."

It truly was nice to be remembered in that way.

This is from Camille Gravel, Democratic National Committee-man in Alexandria, Louisiana. He hadn't been able to come to the last National Committee meeting. He was running for office in Louisiana. I've forgotten what it was on which he wanted information, but he asked me if I would give him a report, which I did. He thanks me and sends me some newspaper clippings.

#### Appointment to the California Consumer Advisory Committee

Shirpser: After Pat Brown was elected [governor, in 1958], he was really grateful to me. I truly did work very hard for him in his campaign for governor. He almost immediately asked me if I would serve on some statewide commission. I said that I'd be glad to do so. FEPC (Fair Employment Practices Committee) had an opening on their committee. Pat called me, and I said that was what I would love to do, because I had worked to bring about FEPC laws. And then Suren Saroyan, who was such a good friend, wrote a perfectly beautiful letter about me, and said that FEPC would be the committee where I could serve most valuably because it had been an interest of mine all through the years. I had worked on it and testified for it, make speeches about it, even when I was running for assembly back in 1950. So that would have been the logical place for me to serve.

Pat said he was sorry, but he had filled the appointment. Then he asked me to serve on a committee to combat "cancer quackery." And though I realized the importance of that, I could see it might lead to a great deal of editorial comic comment. It was a field in which I knew absolutely nothing. I do know a lot about quackery but not cancerwise. So I declined with thanks, said I hoped that Pat would find another post for me where I might serve more valuably, where I had some experience or background.

In the meantime, Peter Odegard and several friends, including Professor Emily Huntington, called me from the University and said that they were so delighted that Pat Brown had agreed to



Shirpser: appoint a consumer counsel in California. This was pioneering because while there were some consumer counsels in the United State, they were not officially appointed and approved by the legislature. This one was going to be, so it would have exceptional prestige and official capacity. My friends at U.C. were all recommending the same person, Helen Nelson. I hadn't met her, so it was arranged that we meet and talk together. I was very much impressed by her. So Pat asked me to come to Sacramento to talk about an appointment for me. I spent all the time talking about Helen and urging Pat to appoint her. Mrs. Persia Campbell (she was a leader in consumer protection fields) came out here from New York to interview prospective candidates for Pat. She recommended Helen Nelson as her leading candidate, too.

When I went to Sacramento and mentioned Helen Nelson for the post of consumer counsel, Pat said, "Who the hell is she?" I said, "Pat, you've gotten dozens of letters about her from qualified people." (I mentioned some of them.) He said, "You know, this is one of the worst parts of being governor. Nobody tells you the things you need to know. Nobody shows you the letters you ought to read."

So he called his administration assistant, an extremely well-qualified person (but who evidently had some other candidate in mind). Pat was really angry. He said, "You get that consumer counsel folder to me. I want to read every word about her and I want to find out everything there is to know, and to interview her."

When she was finally appointed by Pat, I was delighted. Pat asked me to be on that Consumer Advisory Committee, which I was glad to do, because I had worked in the consumer protection field for a long time, especially through Estes Kefauver. I thought I would learn a lot, and it would be a pioneering effort which would be interesting.

So I did, and I served on that committee for eight years. I thought we accomplished a great deal. For instance, after Helen had been in office for about two years representatives of the television industry came to her and said they wanted her to sponsor legislation to protect legitimate repair people from all the fly-by-night people who were not qualified to repair television sets. We had an experiment which I think was very interesting, and Attorney General Stanley Mosk cooperated on this with our Consumer Advisory Committee.





Shirpser: They took three TV sets and "doctored" them, making one thing wrong with each of them. Then they put these sets in three different people's homes. Then they called at least two or three repairmen to come and tell them what was wrong with the sets. One of them took the set away to his shop. We had all the tubes marked with fluorescent ink. They took out the good tubes and put in bad tubes, and charged \$100 for the repair.

Of course, they were fined. I think their license might have been taken away. There were only two uncorrupted television repairmen out of at least nine who were contacted. The others all cheated on what was wrong with the TV sets. When we had that evidence, we went to the legislature. We got a strong bill, and I think we were the first state in the union that was contacted by the industry concerned. That showed that Helen Nelson and our committee had accomplished a great deal. The television industry wrote that we had saved California owners of television sets hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

Once we would meet in Northern California and then we would meet in the south, and then in the middle of the state, but usually in Sacramento, because that's where Helen's office was.

Chall: Was the agency called a committee or a commission.

Shirpser: It was called the Consumer Advisory Committee. There were good people on it. We worked hard and we believed in what we were doing. It was really very productive to serve on that committee.

Chall: What was the role of the committee members?

Shirpser: We helped Helen decide policy matters and often lobbied for legislation. She would turn to us for support when she had legislation to propose. Several of us made speeches at various organizations. There were tremendous strides made to reform credit abuses, and again Stanley Mosk gave us great help with this. There was a pamphlet called Your Credit Rights which told you what interest you were actually paying. Unless you read the fine print, you didn't know. In fact, most of the talks that I gave for the Consumer Advisory Committee were on that subject of credit abuse. I would ask the people in the audience: "How much interest do you think you are paying on a charge account?" Usually they said, "Six, seven or eight per cent." It actually was 1 1/2 percent a month, or 18 percent a year. There was a tremendous need for education in that field.



Shirpsen: I had friends in most districts of the state. They knew I was on that commission. The Business and Professional Women's Clubs asked me to speak; the University Women and the Zonta Clubs asked me to speak to them. I went to Palo Alto to speak to an organization of the Stanford Research Institute, including the wives as well as people who were working there. There was a San Bruno women's club invitation. I was very pleased to have the opportunity, because it meant press coverage and spreading needed information.

Helen was delighted with the response I received. Because I would say, "Write to Helen, and tell her that you believe in what she is doing." From every place I spoke she would get a dozen or more letters. It made me feel that I was accomplishing something worthwhile.

Perhaps you want to know what happened after Governor Reagan was elected. We had a statewide meeting of the Consumer Advisory Committee, and most of the people wanted to resign in a body. When a new governor comes in, it's customary to do this. But I was afraid that everything we had done would go down the drain. So I said, "Why don't we do this first? Let's ask Don Vial (who was our chairman then, George Brunn was our first chairman), to make an appointment with Governor Reagan, and to bring him a concise statement, and tell him what we have accomplished, where we are now, and what our objectives are for the future. We will tell him we're glad to resign, as is customary. But we'd like to have a meeting with him first. We will come to Sacramento at our own expense and we'd like to have a short talk with him in case he is not familiar with the work we've done."

We all received wires within twenty-four hours after he received our letter, and he demanded our resignations. It was really sad because we had accomplished a great deal and so much was lost in Governor Reagan's administration. He appointed a woman of little experience who refused to be interviewed by the press, or to sponsor legislation. She refused to attend consumer associations' statewide conferences. When somebody asked her why she thought she was chosen, she said, "I'm a mother, and I have four children. And who knows more about consumer problems than a woman with four children?"

That shows you what her attitude was. It was really a pity, because so much that we had pioneered for, and had accomplished, went down the drain.



Chall: The members of the committee had all been appointed at the same time--when the committee was set up?

Shirpser: Yes, but when some members resigned from time to time, Pat Brown would fill the vacancy.

Chall: So it wasn't like a legislative advisory commission, or a board, where members had terms of office for a certain period of time. You were not expected to be a permanent committee with overlapping terms?

Shirpser: I believe we were appointed for Governor Brown's term of office.

Chall: Otherwise there wouldn't be any need for committee members to resign en masse. They don't usually do it. They wait until their individual terms are up and then the governor can appoint somebody in their place. This must have been a different thing.

Shirpser: I think at least half of us who originally started were still there when Reagan was elected. I served for eight years. That certificate of thanks from Governor Brown is dated 1958 to 1966.

Of course, we were not paid. We were only given our traveling expenses, and a per diem allowance, which never took care of taxis, tips to the waiter, or an adequate sum for single rooms in hotels. It cost us money but we were all glad to serve. Our committee was composed of a good and representative cross section of California--able and qualified members.

Chall: Was it divided equally between men and women?

Shirpser: I think there were a dozen of us, probably seven men and five women.

Chall: That must have been an interesting experience.

Shirpser: Yes, it was. I learned a lot, too.



Alternate to the Democratic National Convention, 1960

Pre-Convention Maneuvers for Delegates

Shirpser: Then we come to 1960. Without telling me, my dear friend, Senator Estes Kefauver, called Pat Brown and he said, "I would like to ask you a big favor. Clara paid a high price for supporting me and I urge you to appoint her as a delegate. I believe she deserves being a delegate in 1960." And Pat said, "Of course she does." Estes said, "May I tell her that she has a commitment from you?" And he said, "Of course, tell her. I'd be delighted. No one deserves it more."

So Estes told me of his conversation with Pat Brown and I was delighted. I have a copy of his letter. So, I waited and I didn't hear from Pat Brown. Estes had asked me to let him know the minute I heard. So, I wrote to Estes and said that I hadn't heard a word from Pat, and that I didn't like to write him.

So Estes said, "I think you should write him. He told me he wanted you to be a delegate and maybe he's waiting to hear that you would like to be. Do thank him for it and tell him that I suggested you write."

So I did, and I still didn't hear from Pat. So I wrote to Estes and Estes really resented this. He had had a firm commitment from Pat, and Estes firmly believed that I did deserve to be a delegate. And I wanted to help Adlai. By that time, I knew that Adlai was still interested in again being a candidate for the nomination of president in 1960.

Chall: By that time I assume that Pat Brown was not interested in Adlai any more.

Shirpser: How right you are! Well, we had district caucuses to nominate delegates. Because the Kefauver delegation had done this in '56, we really forced it upon the uncommitted delegation in 1960. So "in order to get more harmony," they said, they threw the (mine) Seventh Congressional District and the Eighth Congressional District into one caucus. We had ten half votes, and I noted that our caucus came out at the very short end of it. The Eighth got more delegates than we did. At any rate we did vote for and nominate ten people to be delegates.





Shirpser: The difference between this in 1960, and the one in 1956, is that we in 1956, the Kefauver delegation, abided by our commitments to the district caucuses that they would choose three out of five, and the other delegates the statewide committee would choose.

But this is what happened in 1960. I was one of the top three chosen, so I had to be on the delegation, because we had five from each district. When the state committee for the uncommitted delegation made their selection they didn't take one person from the Seventh Congressional District. Not one of those chosen was selected, and not one single woman. I was angry about that. They asked the caucus to make selections and then cancelled the choice of the Seventh Congressional District, where I was one of the top three out of five in their voting.

I wrote one of the strongest letters I have ever written to Pat Brown, who had made a previous commitment to Estes Kefauver. I was absolutely sure he would see to it that if I wasn't chosen by the caucus they would put me in as a delegate-at-large when the state committee met.

Pat Brown was the final arbiter of the state committee because he was chairman of the delegation. If the chairman says, "I want so-and-so on the delegation," usually the committee goes along. I was finally given an alternate-at-large delegate status. I immediately said, "I won't go." Then, friends tried to convince me that I should go, or I wouldn't be able to help Adlai. Lucretia Grady was especially persuasive. I protested that she hadn't been appointed either. Ellie Heller was, of course, but Lucretia wasn't appointed, though she was a great lady in the Democratic party. Few women had as many national connections and friends as Lucretia. She seconded Franklin Delano Roosevelt's nomination, and Jim Farley was one of her closest friends. She was the first woman, I believe, to be vice-chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Her husband had been ambassador to Greece, Turkey, and India. In fact Katie Louchheim told me that no one was as widely entertained when she came to Washington as Lucretia Grady was.

I think I have to read you from some of those letters, because I can't give you the facts otherwise.

On February 26 I wrote to Pat, as Estes had asked me. I had another matter about which to write to him, praising his



Shirpser: stand on the Caryl Chessman capital punishment. He was trying to stop the execution. Then I said that I had received a letter from Estes Kefauver in which I spoke of the fact that Estes had done this of his own volition. I hadn't even known about it until Estes wrote me, and that I was happy that Pat had said that I deserved to be on the delegation, that he wanted me to be on the delegation. I wrote that I was looking forward to working with him.

I didn't receive a reply. Then the caucus selection was completely disregarded. After giving us a commitment they would abide by our decision for a certain number of delegates, they broke their word. I wrote to Assemblyman Bill Munnell on March 19, 1960, and I told him there were many calls from Democrats all over the state who were outraged at the way that the caucuses' decisions were being negated and ignored, and that I, too, strongly resented their negation of their own commitment to the caucus.

Chall: Who was Bill Munnell at that point?

Shirpser: He was an assemblyman and the chairman of the committee to choose a Democratic delegation. I had always believed in practicing participation in Democratic politics at the local level. So I was delighted when there was going to be district caucuses, as the Kefauver delegation had them previously in 1956. We had 150 delegates there at the caucus. We had been asked to recommend up to ten. The wording was, "The executive committee will guarantee to select for the delegation no less than two of your caucus recommendations."

Then I wrote of my work to always get women participating in politics. The fact emerged that out of a list of ten delegates for the Seventh and Eighth Congressional Districts not one woman was a delegate. How could they expect women to carry the necessary, but often monotonous task of campaigns, if they are ignored when there are some prerogatives being given out. Then I also told him, quoting from the Democratic Manual which interprets what alternates are. They call them Alternate Delegates in an effort to give them a little prestige. I wrote: "The Democratic Convention Manual states that there will be an equal number of alternates to the delegates in each congressional district." Then I said, "Kindly note that alternate begins with a small 'a' whereas 'Delegate' begins with a big D, and that in previous conventions the alternates have sat in the balcony while the delegates are seated on the convention floor. The delegates have a vote, the alternates do not."



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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

February 19, 1960

EVERARD H. SMITH, CLERK  
 THOMAS J. SCOTT, ASST. CLERK

Mrs. A. J. Shirpser  
 2541 Hilgarde Avenue  
 Berkley 9, California

Dear Clara:

It was so good to talk to you on the phone. I got  
 Pat Brown this afternoon. Said you were deserving of a  
 place on the delegation and this was a must and he would do  
 it. You will, of course, be hearing from him, but if you  
 don't, call his office. In the meantime you can write.

I am enclosing a copy of the letter I have just  
 written him.

Best to you. *and Ted at I think he, just*

Sincerely,

*Estes*  
 Estes Kefauver, USS

EK:rk

*Notice Receipt May be used for  
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 focus*



Shirpser: I called a friend in Washington who is an expert in convention law. His definition is, "A Delegate is a person appointed or elected to transact the business of the convention with a power to vote. An alternate is a substitute who goes to the convention in case a Delegate becomes ill, etc., thus creating a vacancy for a Delegate." I further wrote: "So you can't possibly get away with calling an alternate a Delegate because alternates are just a substitute in case a Delegate isn't available."

Then I wrote, "As a former nominee of the Eighteenth Assembly District, member of the Alameda County Democratic Committee, State Central Committee, Executive Committee, and above all former Democratic National Committeewoman for California, I am hurt and humiliated that I have been bypassed." I told him that "friends all over the state are outraged and that many people have called me." Among them I mentioned George Killion who said, "No one in the whole state deserves to be a delegate as much as you do," as well as many other friends who felt that these inequities should be corrected, especially as they referred to me.

I also said, "I believe in all sincerity I would have made this protest even if you had appointed me as a delegate. Because I believe when you have set up rules of procedure you are honor-bound to live up to them."

The letter I got from Bill Munnell was a very interesting one. He said, "I've read your letter and can only say there were thousands upon thousands of dedicated Democrats all of whom would like to serve on the presidential delegation."

I think with my political responsibilities over the years, I'm not quite in the category of "thousands upon thousands of deserving Democrats."

Chall: Did he answer anything about not even following the original ground rules?

Shirpser: No, he completely skipped that, and then had the nerve to say something that I resented. He said, "I'm enclosing a copy of a release comparing our delegation with that of Vice-President Nixon which will indicate how vastly superior our delegation is to that of our opposition." In it he says that 16 percent of the state Democratic delegation are women. And he calls that an improvement! I know we had many times that number on the Kefauver delegation four years before. Imagine saying how good





Shirpser: our delegation is, when we have 16 percent of women of the total state delegation, but only 5 percent women from the Alameda County delegation.

He wrote about how many more legislators and congressmen we have on our delegation. I would have liked to have had him say more of minority representatives.

"Among the Democratic delegates are seven representatives of minority groups. Nixon has only one." There were 162 delegates. Is that something to be proud of--that we have seven minority group representatives?

"Democrats have twenty-six women on the delegation. Nixon only has eleven."

I felt I had been demoted after Pat Brown's commitment to Estes. I told him that I knew of the number of friends who had called him in my behalf, and Peter Odegard said I could use his name, and I did. Then I gave him other background of my work for the Democratic party and its candidates.

The motive back of all this I will tell you, because Peter Odegard told me, and so did several other people who had gone to Pat Brown and said, "It's an outrage that Clara is only an alternate." Pat Brown said he felt terrible because he was breaking his commitment to Estes and to me, but that a certain wealthy Democratic former official, a woman, had said that she would leave the delegation and she would not contribute in the campaign if I were made a delegate, that I had to be punished for not supporting Stevenson in the 1956 primary. (When Stevenson himself had told me of my value to him, especially after Estes gave me the privilege of calling him.)

I asked Pat Brown did he think this was fair play. I said, "I will give you the names of several friends who have told me this same account, and it has always been the identical story which you have told them."

This more than almost anything I know exemplifies to me the power of money in politics. The loss of those thousands of dollars of contributions which she would give in the campaign, the fact she would leave the delegation, was enough to influence the governor of the state, the chairman of the California delegation, to follow her bidding. He did it most unwillingly, I'm positive. He struggled with his conscience. This was not



Shirpser: the sort of thing Pat wanted to do. But I'm just giving you this as an instance of how evil the power of money could be.

Nobody ever tried to punish her or dared to try, when she didn't pick the "right candidate" or was loyal to someone who lost. She had power because she had so much money and she wielded that money as an instrument for power. I'm not mentioning her name although Pat did admit who it was.

So I wrote him very bitterly that I didn't think I wanted to go on with any other further participation in the California Democratic party. There were plenty of other places where I was needed and wanted and could accomplish something. This was the last humiliation I was ever going to take at the hands of the Democratic party.

But I did decide to accept the alternate "delegate" post, because friends convinced me that I could be of value at the convention, especially Adlai's supporters. I still had many friends and contacts in other delegations around the United States.

I did work hard at the convention. I did help where the candidates were ones I wanted to support. But I never was so active again in Democratic politics. I thought, "It's just not worthwhile, if one person can dictate to that extent." Even though she had done many good things for the Democratic party, her money gave her too much power.

Chall: Did Pat Brown then answer your letter?

Shirpser: He called me. He didn't actually admit all this, but he didn't deny it, either. He just said he was terribly sorry that it turned out that way--he would do everything he could at the convention to see that I was included in everything. He said he was sure that I would wield influence there. He knew I was for Adlai and he was for Kennedy, though we were "uncommitted" until released. That may have put another "nail in my coffin."

Chall: On the wrong side again.

Shirpser: Yes, 'as usual.

Chall: You had committed yourself to Stevenson at this point?

Shirpser: Practically so, if he decided to run.



Chall: A public commitment?

Shirpser: Well, no--we were an uncommitted delegation so I couldn't do anything publicly.

Chall: But people knew.

Shirpser: Everyone on the delegation talked to everyone else and I said, "I'm for Stevenson, if he wants to run. I think he's the best qualified man in the whole country."

Chall: Up to that time he had still not said he was going to run, had he?

Shirpser: No, but those of us who were close to Adlai--we pretty well knew it.

Chall: That he would accept a draft?

Shirpser: He was coming to Los Angeles for the convention and he had a big suite in a Los Angeles hotel, to which I was invited to visit him and Bill. Lucretia was working very hard for him. She had some title in his campaign. It was very congenial for me to work with her, as always.

#### Meeting with John F. Kennedy

Shirpser: Prior to this, there was something very interesting that happened, regarding our delegation. I received a wire from Jack Kennedy, prior to the convention in 1960. The wire stated that he would appreciate it if I came to his suite at the Fairmont Hotel and conferred with him.

Chall: This would have been in San Francisco?

Shirpser: Yes. Then I got a wire from Senator Stuart Symington who was running, too, and who was an old and dear friend. There were Kennedy, Symington, Johnson, all presidential nominee candidates. But only Kennedy and Symington were there at that particular time for the Democratic dinner. This was followed by a call from San Francisco mayor, Jack Shelley. "What time do you want to come to confer with Jack, Clara?" I answered, "Any time that is convenient for him?" "No, you say when."



Shirpser: You know, this was VIP treatment. So I said, "Is 2:30 p.m. all right?" He said, "Fine."

When I got to the door of the Fairmont Hotel, someone I knew on the Kennedy staff was waiting and escorted me up to the Kennedy suite. There were about ten people sitting in the living room of the suite. I was shown right into Jack Kennedy's room, without waiting. He said, "Hello, Clara, I'm so happy to see you." It was my first real contact with him that I can remember, and he used my first name, establishing a friendly relationship right away.

Jack Shelley later told me this was a great honor for me, to see Jack Kennedy privately, because usually you went in with five or six at a time. I never knew anyone in my life so well primed for me, to tell me the things I would like to hear. First of all, he started praising Estes. I knew the rather hostile relationship they had, but I didn't say anything. Then he started telling me about the importance of improving civil rights (and he hadn't up to that time, a particularly good record on civil rights). Now he was for all the things I was for: equal rights for women, etc.; he went down the line. It was amazing that he was so well prepared. I really admired his homework. He knew what each delegate wanted to hear.

Chall: And you were only an alternate.

Shirpser: I was only an alternate. But of course I had been a national committeewoman and he knew that to have me on his side would be of some help.

Anyway, when he got through listing these, he said, "Now Clara, I hope I can count on your support."

I said, "I'm terribly sorry, Senator."

He said, "Don't call me Senator, call me Jack."

"I'm terribly sorry, Jack, but I thought you knew that I have always supported Adlai Stevenson. I've been so close to him through the years. And while we're uncommitted, certainly my loyalty, if he wants to run, will have to be in support of him."

He had already told me that he didn't think there was a man in the whole country as well qualified to be secretary of state





Shirpsen: as Adlai Stevenson. Later, I learned from Adlai that there must have been a hundred people throughout the United States telling him that Jack had told them that if he won, when he chose the secretary of state, he didn't know anyone as well qualified as Adlai Stevenson.

Adlai Stevenson told me that when I had lunch with him at the United Nations Dining Room in New York years later. Adlai had reliable information that there were ten names on Jack Kennedy's list for prospective secretary of state, and that Adlai's name wasn't even among the ten. Adlai said, "That makes it unanimous, Clara. I haven't heard one person interviewed by Jack Kennedy who knew that that person was for me, who wasn't told the same thing--that Jack considered me the best qualified man for secretary of state."

Then in this interview Jack said, "Do you know what you Stevenson people are going to do? You are going to cause a deadlock, and I won't make it and Adlai won't make it. Then you're going to have Lyndon Johnson as your nominee. Do you want Lyndon Johnson?"

I said, "No, I don't."

Jack Kennedy said, "Neither do I."

Now isn't this ironic, in terms of what happened later? Jack later asked Johnson to be his vice-president, and then Johnson became president after Jack was assassinated.

Chall: It shows that politics makes strange bedfellows. So, how did you feel?

Shirpsen: I almost told Jack that I would support him. The charisma of that man was incalculable. He would give you that warm, lovable smile. He had such a keen glance that looked right through you. You felt that you were the only one in the place that he cared about. There was this great personal identification with him, beyond anyone I've ever known. I had to bite my tongue; I wasn't for him and I almost said that I was. It was the hardest thing for me to resist and say, "No, I'm for Adlai, unless he doesn't run."

I came out of there, and the press reporters were all waiting. "Well, Clara, did the charm-boy get you in his camp?" I said, "I'm uncommitted." They said, "Like hell you are! Are



Shirpser: you for Jack?" I said, "I'm uncommitted. That's what I signed a pledge to be, and that's what I'm going to be."

So they said, "Have you seen Stuart Symington yet?" I said, "No, he has sent me a wire. He wants me to see him. I'm going there now." "Well," they said, "he hasn't quite as much charm as Jack, but watch your step, Clara, he's got a lot." I said, "I know him well."

#### Not Meeting with Stuart Symington

Shirpser: Stuart's suite was only a few doors away, on the same corridor as Jack's. I got to the door of his suite and I knocked. Eve, his attractive wife, opened the door. She didn't remember me. I hadn't seen her often. I said that Senator Symington had wired that he wanted to see me. "I'm Clara Shirpser, former Democratic National Committeewoman." She answered, "Oh yes, I've heard of you often. But he has a lot of calls to take now. We arrived late and he has many calls to make to Washington. I'm terribly afraid that he can't see you. You're coming to our cocktail party tonight?"

I said: "Yes, of course, I am. But there are many things I could now tell him which I think would be helpful to him. Isn't he seeing the delegates and talking to them one by one as Jack Kennedy is doing?"

"Oh no, he's going to see them all at the cocktail party tonight."

I said, "I recommended that he see them individually. Jack Kennedy is really 'going to town' in there, and Stu is going to hurt himself if he doesn't see the delegates and talk to each of them."

She said, "Well, you tell him that tonight."

I answered, "It will be too late tonight since he's leaving in the morning. Do you want me to write a note to him?"

She said, "No, he won't have time."



Shirpser:

So I left. That led to a very bad story in the press, that Clara Shirpser who had a private interview with Jack Kennedy, being met by Jack Shelley, mayor of San Francisco, and she couldn't even get into Stuart Symington's suite when she had been invited also by wire to come and talk to him. And they compared his campaign with its lack of organization and efficiency, with Jack Kennedy's which was probably the most highly organized and effective one in operation. So this led to bad publicity for Stuart which I certainly regretted. And I didn't have a chance to talk to him privately at the large cocktail party of which he was host. Really, he needed to know a lot of things I could have told him. I think Stu hurt himself badly in California by just having a party where he said most cordially: "Hello, how are you? Glad to see you." If that's the extent of your conference with people, it is not effective.

I had another interesting experience with Bobby Kennedy when he came to California. He wanted to train and organize volunteers for the campaign after Jack was nominated. I was hostess on the committee for the lunch in his honor. This was to be an all-day conference. I came in to the morning session, and Bobby Kennedy remembered me. I had talked with him several times at the convention. We had worked together for Jack's nomination after Adlai withdrew. Bobby started to talk on precinct organization, and on telephone committees, and on poll watchers, and fund raising. I could have given the same speech. I had given it for years all over the state. I listened to him for quite awhile. Then I thought that I had better go and see how things were going for the lunch.

I had responsibility for that, to make sure people were greeted and introduced and seated properly--all the things that need to be checked. I sat at the back of the room on the aisle, purposely. I got up very quietly and started out of the conference room and Bobby Kennedy stopped speaking. There was complete silence in the room. I turned around and looked at him. He was glaring at me. He said, "Clara, I'm sure you know more about this than I do, but if you sat still and listened, you might learn just one new thing. Won't you sit down?"

I was furious. Naturally, everybody started laughing, and saying, "Come on, Clara, be a good sport, sit down." So I sat down, and I didn't leave the room until everybody else had gone out and then I went up to him and said, "Who do you think you are, bawling me out in public like that, in my own group, in my own state! How dare you talk to me that way! Yes, I did know



Shirpser: everything you talked about. I've been doing all the campaign details for more years than I can remember. What you were saying was excellent, but I wasn't accomplishing anything just sitting there and listening to you. And by not going out and carrying out the responsibilities I had accepted for your luncheon meeting, I was really not doing what I had promised to do."

"Oh," he said, "Clara, don't be sore. I was just kidding."

"That's supposed to be kidding?" I still was angry. It was such a rude thing to do. He was quite brash, though extremely intelligent and capable. I don't want to minimize his ability. I think a lot of things Jack got credit for, Bobby really initiated. He was magnificent in the campaign, absolutely indefatigable. And he adored Jack. I'm sure he was responsible for good strategy and policy making. But he gave one the impression that he got everything "right from the horse's mouth." The Kennedys were never humble!

I thought Jack grew in office tremendously. He was maturing and developing into a really great president. And I thought Bobby was excellent as attorney general. And something I can tell you in that regard: Right after Bobby was appointed attorney general, I was with a visiting California supreme court justice (I won't mention his name, because maybe he wouldn't want me to do so, but he is one of our leading supreme court justices in the United States, as well as internationally). He was resentful that the brother of the president was appointed attorney general. He didn't think he was sufficiently qualified in the law profession. Then perhaps, eight or nine months later, I was with this judge again. I said, "Now, what do you think of Bobby Kennedy as attorney general?" He answered: "He is one of the best we have ever had. Everything I said in the beginning was wrong. For qualifications, for energy, for drive, for innovation, I don't know a man who has been a better attorney general than Bobby Kennedy."

So that was very high praise and a complete change of opinion.

Now, do you want to get to the convention?

Chall: Was it Pat Brown's decision that it would be serious if all of the different candidates came into the state and held a primary. He didn't want a repeat of the problems of previous years? So





Chall: the candidates stayed away? Did you agree on that?

Shirpser: I think that primaries are important. I really feel that this is the way you test the mettle of a candidate. He learns to get to the people and to know the people and they have a basis for voting intelligently. But there is tremendous blood-letting, too, during primary contests. Estes and Adlai at the end of that campaign in 1956 were completely different from their usual selves. They were striking out in a way that neither one of them would have done normally. Because so much depended on that California primary in terms of who would win the convention nomination.



XV THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN, 1960  
(Interview 18, July 16, 1973)

The Democratic National Convention

Chall: You were ready to go to the convention as an alternate. This, I think you explained, was a badly divided delegation. It was deliberate, I guess, that a few people who were for every potential candidate were brought in.

Shirpser: I think they were trying to see that each candidate, in the field, had some people who would support them. I truly wasn't committed at that point. In fact I find letters I've written to Pat Brown the chairman deploring that some of the people on the delegation had come out publicly for their various candidates. I thought this was unfortunate and unfair to him, because it's hard to have an uncommitted delegation when you know who is for whom, to start with.

I have a most amusing article that Art Hoppe wrote about Lucretia Grady. He said, "That's no little old lady!" And he tells the way she conducted a recent meeting. It is really hilarious. She was going through a 1956 list of delegates and she would say, "Now these are 'clarified'" and Art Hoppe says in parenthesis "(meaning they are for Stevenson)." And then she said, "Now, Adlai will appreciate your support whether he knows it or not." She then said, "All those in favor? Moved, voted, carried." Nobody had even voted!

Chall: What was her role?

Shirpser: She had a very important role in the Stevenson pre-convention procedure.

Chall: Was she on the delegation?



Shirpser: I know she was very offended that she wasn't a delegate. She obviously should have been. Perhaps she had the title of Northern California Chairman for Stevenson. She was openly committed.

This was a very funny meeting, really. I was laughing out loud as I read Art Hoppe's column. It was so typical of Lucretia.

Chall: Had you been there?

Shirpser: Yes, I had. It was really wonderful the way she conducted that meeting, with such control. Practically no one opened their mouths. She thanked everyone. When they were in disagreement she would say, "That's an excellent idea, but now let's have the vote." It went the way she wanted it, of course. She was taking on the different newsmen, and she said that she was going to tell Scotty (James Reston), and Art had a subheadline, "Look out Scotty, here she comes." It was a funny article.

Chall: Was it one of his regular columns, the kind we see now in the newspaper?

Shirpser: It was a special article, signed by him.

Perhaps before I start talking about the convention I ought to explain Estes' role because in the early polls he was leading everyone.

Chall: In 1960 even?

Shirpser: Early in 1960. I mentioned this in our last interview. He, of course, longed to come to the convention in 1960, but there was much opposition to him in Tennessee in his race for reelection as senator. It was such a crucial race, and it was the same year as the convention, 1960. Many of the leaders there felt that it would be a source of great contention in Tennessee if he were seeking the national presidency when he should be concentrating on reelection. After all he had sought the presidency in 1952 and in 1956, and his advisers in Tennessee urged him not to make the race for president.

So he decided not to come to the 1960 convention. In the first place, he knew there would be a demonstration for him and he knew there would be talk of drafting him even if he weren't running, so he thought the best thing to do was to stay in



Shirpsers: Tennessee, and mend his fences. He had a strong opponent, who was well financed.

Chall: Democratic opponent in the primary?

Shirpsers: Yes. The primary in Tennessee is tantamount to election. This man was partly financed, as always, by gamblers who sent in money to defeat Kefauver. They had never forgotten his investigations. The drug industry always sent his opponent a big sum because of Estes' investigation committee's findings on abuses in pricing, and drugs which were not properly tested before marketing; the oil industry, because he was against oil depletion tax deferment, and the conservatives and reactionaries because of his strong stand on civil rights.

So, it was with the greatest of joy that I learned he won the most smashing victory he had in his whole career, standing upright for all the principles in which he believed, and campaigning indefatigably as only Estes could.

I have an amusing footnote. I did get some funds together to send to his campaign, as I always did. I longed to be there the night of victory. I was invited, of course. There was a big party; I think it was in Chattanooga. When I called, his personal secretary, Henrietta O'Donahue, whom I knew so well and with whom I had worked with such affection...She was probably the best secretary anybody ever had; she was simply wonderful. When Nancy and Estes were campaigning, Henrietta even "babysat" with the children. She was a friend. She was the one to talk to when you wanted Estes. I always could get through to Estes even when it was "impossible." I had Estes' private number. I phoned, but he wasn't there. I said, "Where is he, Henrietta? I want to congratulate him." She said, "Our senator is 'roamin' tonight!" She spoke with a decided southern accent. "So now," I said, "I've got a Roman senator!" For years after that, I called Estes "my Roman senator."

#### The Problems of Logistics

Shirpsers: Then we come to the convention in Los Angeles. The "uncommitted" delegation surely knew where they were going, every one of them.

Chall: In five different directions.





Shirpser: There were: Stevenson, Johnson, Kennedy, Symington, Humphrey. They all came to talk to our caucuses, of course. But the greatest confusion that I ever have seen in a convention was in Los Angeles. We weren't staying in the same hotels, you see. In Chicago we were in only four different hotels. But in Los Angeles, I would think we may have been scattered among twenty hotels in various sections of the city. The distances, the effort of transportation and communication were so unbelievable that most of the time you got to a meeting after it was over, or you heard about it the next day, or that night when you got back to your room, you found a message that there had been a meeting at 2:30 that same afternoon.

Chall: The California delegation and alternates were also spread out all over the city?

Shirpser: It's a big city. I can't tell you how many meetings I missed, how many caucuses, how many committee meetings. It was simply bedlam. Finally, some of my friends in Southern California arranged to call for Ad and me, which was a big help, especially in getting to the convention hall. To find them afterwards was so difficult, because you never knew what time the convention would end. Sometimes, you would make an appointment to leave at a definite hour, and you would be right in the midst of something important, perhaps at eleven o'clock that night, so you couldn't keep that appointment.

Some of the delegates who were from Southern California were kind, especially Tom Carrell, who usually called for Ad and me and drove us to the convention. Otherwise I don't know if we would have ever gotten there! There are so few taxis, and the layout of that town, with its long distances between places, made life terribly difficult. It was the worst-handled and the least efficient convention I had ever attended.

Chall: Where was the convention site?

Shirpser: It was a great, big place, way out on the outskirts of the city. There was plenty of room in the convention hall, but the difficulty of getting there was terrible. The convention never started until hours later because people were straggling in for hours, hot and tired. There were many parties. There was the "750 Club" luncheon. I have the invitation. The "750" Table meant that anyone who contributed \$750 was a member. I didn't contribute \$750, but I did fill a table at \$100 each, of ten people. You either raised it or donated it.



- Shirpser: There, the two people who spoke were Kennedy and Johnson.
- Chall: I see their picture on that. Does that mean it was already decided?
- Shirpser: Let's see the date. It's July 16, 750 Club breakfast in Los Angeles. We'll have to check the exact date of the convention.
- Chall: I would doubt that they would have their pictures together in that way unless it was finished.
- Shirpser: I really don't remember the exact date. The thing that I remember most is the terrible confusion and difficulty of meeting with the delegates, participating in the things you were supposed to do. I remember I had an interview with Adlai and Bill Blair who were in one of the hotels. I arrived there hours late. Adlai understood, and still saw me, but the pressure of knowing you should be there and being beset with anxiety all the time, made this a dreadful convention. Then, of course, this was the third convention for me. In the other two I had been assigned a car and driver as Democratic National Committeeman which made life pleasant. At Los Angeles, the terrible transportation problems were worse there than they had ever been before. That was the last convention I ever attended. I didn't think I would survive another one.

#### Nominating Stevenson

- Shirpser: I remember this feeling of apprehension, and pressure, and difficulty. There were many good people working for Adlai. I find a lovely letter from U.S. Senator Mike Monroney (Adlai's leader) after the convention was over, thanking me, and telling me how much he enjoyed working with me; also explaining that even though we lost, the liberal platform was really the result of those of us working for Stevenson. He didn't think it would have been nearly as strong a platform if we hadn't been there.

He said that he thought in terms of the terrible odds we were working against, we did quite well. He said that public acclaim for Stevenson at the convention was a joy to remember. I remember that, too, and I'll tell you about it. Eleanor Roosevelt was there, and she went from caucus to caucus of the various states' delegations, speaking for Adlai. She was such



Shirpsen: a magnificent woman. No one could have had as valuable an ally as she was. At one point she was not scheduled to speak at the convention. So she calmly announced to the press that she intended to lead the floor demonstration for Adlai Stevenson, and she would walk at the head of the demonstrators.

Everybody had visions of her being knocked down and trampled, and believe me, the invitation for her to speak came very quickly after that. I was with her when she just announced to the press in the calmest way, "I have decided to lead the demonstration for Adlai Stevenson after he is nominated." The press said, "But you can't do it. You're going to be knocked down. Everybody will rush you for autographs. You'll stop the whole convention." She said, "Then I will."

She spoke so calmly, no excitement, no sense that she might be in danger from that tremendous crowd.

Chall: But a perfect sense of timing.

Shirpsen: She was just great. She was a wonderful woman.

Of course you remember that Eugene McCarthy made the nominating speech for Adlai, and that really was a great speech. I have a copy of it somewhere. I think that must have been one of the highlights of Gene's career, because that speech was truly stirring. It was so strong, eloquent, and forthright. It was the best speech I ever heard him make. He absolutely lifted that convention to its feet. I've never seen a bigger, more enthusiastic, longer-lasting demonstration. And much as I loathe that kind of thing, as long as there were demonstrations I was glad that it was such a great one, because Adlai was sitting in his hotel suite watching it on TV, and it must have been heart warming for him, because there were so many excellent people there supporting him.

Chall: Maybe later we'll discuss the feelings of the delegates for each of the candidates.



### John F. Kennedy Wins the Nomination

Shirpser: It was pretty obvious that the California delegation majority was going to be for Jack Kennedy. He and his brother were probably the best political organizers there ever existed. He had the money with which to do it. There was lavish "open house" at all the hotels, where the delegates were invited to eat and drink, at all hours of the day and night. Jack went from one caucus to another. He always spoke with a great deal of charm and eloquence. He really worked terribly hard. So did Bobby. So did his sisters and brothers-in-law. The whole family was there!

His father was also there, but in an apartment; he did not appear in public. His apartment happened to be near the small hotel where Ad and I were staying. We would hear sirens, and there would be Jack, arriving with a motorcycle escort. He would go to confer with his father daily, I think; supposedly secretly, but nothing was secret during that convention. Jack had to have a guard around him, because the Secret Service was assigned to him. So he was conferring with his father, who certainly was an experienced political strategist. I don't believe Jack agreed with his father on issues, but he was a devoted son, and he knew that his father knew many important people. When Jack was having problems, his father could probably call the appropriate person and straighten them out.

As the convention progressed, there was never any doubt in my mind that Jack Kennedy would get the nomination. Adlai did withdraw when he saw how the votes were mounting for Kennedy. It was definitely a Kennedy convention.

The California delegation certainly supported him. It wasn't an acrimonious battle. It was just that everyone was trying to help his own candidate.

Do you remember what Jack told me, "Do you want Lyndon Johnson for president?" And when I said, "No, I don't," he answered, "Neither do I." Then Jack asked Johnson to be his vice-presidential nominee.

Chall: Do you have any idea why? Was there anything you got in on behind the scenes that--

Shirpser: There were so many rumors and so many people who were supposed to know, told me different stories. I heard at one point that





Shirpser: Bobby Kennedy was very much opposed to it. I don't think Bobby and Lyndon Johnson got along well. Then in the end, I was told, Sam Rayburn prevailed on them that Lyndon would add strength to the ticket and that Jack needed the Southern states' votes--that he would have a much better chance of getting elected if he had Lyndon with him. So I think that was the prevailing argument, and Lyndon Johnson had been majority leader of the Senate for a long time, and he was Sam Rayburn's long-time protégé. He was extremely well known.

That may have been the wisest decision. I didn't think so at the time. After all, they did win and did get some southern states' votes. So Lyndon's influence must have helped the Kennedy victory.

Chall: Can you tell me something about that Stevenson activity in the gallery? This is a Walter Cronkite article of August 11, 1972. I guess he was considering campaigns in the past. He was talking about the 1960 convention. "The Stevenson organization," he said, "had been allowed a mere thirty-four tickets for the hall, but had been able to obtain an additional two thousand tickets from various sources. Then the Stevenson camp learned that the Kennedy organization had been allotted nearly 2500 tickets, so Stevenson supporters pinned on some Kennedy-for-President buttons and walked away with another 1500 tickets. The strength of the Kennedy organization saved the day. If you watched the television you know the convention had every appearance of being Stevenson country, but it wasn't and John Kennedy was the nominee."

Shirpser: That sounds familiar. I know we spoke before about how some people got their passes and tickets printed illegally. This certainly happened, and I think that's unfortunate. But I remember in the 1952 convention, Jack Norman who was head of the Tennessee delegation and also had a national post in Estes' campaign said, "I think the whole Kefauver delegation nationally was allotted perhaps 100 tickets and Stevenscn 2000."

The people who ran those conventions were in positions of power, and sometimes they abused that power.

"Of course Adlai didn't really make a race for it. In my own heart I thought he wanted it more in '60 than he ever had before. He talked to me about it. He said, 'Look, I've had the nomination of my party twice. If they want me, I am available. I am not going to campaign for it, and I'm not going to seek it.'"



Chall: He had said this twice before too.

Shirpser: But from the way he spoke I really think he thought there might be a deadlock and that they would draft him. That was his best hope. That was what the people who supported him were hoping, too. But it didn't happen. The Kennedy bandwagon started rolling, and became a regular juggernaut. This bandwagon philosophy is, "I've got to get on that bandwagon now. I've got to get my vote registered in time. I've got to get credit for it." I don't know what credit you get. Nobody knows who voted for whom, but this psychology seems to sweep the convention in all three that I've attended. They want to be with the winner.

Kennedy certainly worked hard for his nomination, and so did his whole family. Very few candidates have ever had a family like the Kennedy family with everyone able, willing, and anxious. He really took that convention.

I have a copy of his speech. I was rereading part of it.

I thought you might be interested in this picture. It shows me wearing the Stevenson hat at the 1960 convention. There's Pat Brown conferring with Zsa Zsa Gabor. She was a great political leader. He was evidently getting a lot of good advice from her. He looks sort of hypnotized, doesn't he? Or mesmerized might be the better word?

Chall: You said you went into the convention truly uncommitted.

Shirpser: Yes, but once we got to the convention then people were really working for their own candidates.

Chall: Deep in your heart you were thinking that you would be for Stevenson?

Shirpser: Yes. If there had been any overriding reason why I should be for someone else, I could have been. I had never publicly pledged myself, nor even privately. When we got to the convention everybody started using convention material for their candidates and I put on a Stevenson hat.

I met Jane Dick. She had been Adlai's national campaign women's chairman in 1956. She was so happy seeing me wearing that Stevenson hat. She threw her arms around me and said, "No one from the California delegation has come near me, Clara." We were on the convention floor. She said, "Will you bring me over there, because I don't want to walk over alone to that



Shirpsen: delegation. I said, "Certainly, I'll be glad to." I brought her up to two of the California convention leaders. She looked them in the eye and said, "You traitors!" She had her arm around me with the Stevenson hat. They both started sputtering. They were both men who had been all-the-way-for-Adlai before. She told them how delighted she was to see me being so loyal to Adlai.

Chall: Did you really think that Adlai Stevenson at that point had any kind of a chance?

Shirpsen: If he were drafted, if there were a deadlock in the convention. I saw this as a possibility, because there were strong candidates there, and if they had deadlocked, especially Johnson and Kennedy, I think the convention might have turned to Adlai.

I have a letter from Humphrey saying that was his hope, too-- that if there was a deadlock between Kennedy and Johnson that they would turn to Hubert.

But I thought they would turn to Adlai. A group of us went to the Illinois delegation, saying: "Shame on you. Why aren't you supporting Adlai, your great Illinoisian."

Chall: They weren't?

Shirpsen: No. They weren't, at that point. I don't remember who they were for. We just stood there and shouted at them. We were angry at them.

That seems to pretty well take us through the convention except I would just like to give you one or two quotes from The New Frontier speech of Kennedy. It evidently had been prepared in advance, because it couldn't have been that good if written only the night before he won the nomination.

I felt it was very important that he was seeing his campaign as a set of challenges. He said he wouldn't speak of promises but he would sum up "not what I intend to offer the American people but what I intend to ask of them."

Chall: That's pretty much what he said in his inauguration speech.

Shirpsen: Yes, he did. But he said it then at the convention, "I will appeal to their pride, not to their pocketbook. I will hold out the promise of more sacrifice instead of more security."



Shirpser: And he went on in that vein, very convincingly. I remember that as a great speech. Then at the end he said, "This is the question of the "new frontier." He coined that phrase there. "This is a choice our nation must make, not merely between two men or two parties but between the public interest and the private comfort, national greatness and national decline, between the fresh air of progress and the stale dank atmosphere of normalcy, between determined dedication and creeping mediocrity."

That's really good use of the English language, don't you think so? It was very stirring, and he made a religious reference at the end which is customary. He did it very well.

This is July 15, 1960, so that picture at the breakfast club must have been before the nomination.

Chall: It must have gone off the rolls immediately afterwards. Because that was the July 16 dinner.

Shirpser: Yes, you're right. July 16.

There were many parties, friends who were on the Democratic National Committee always gave me warm greetings, invited me to many of their parties. I saw a lot of people I knew, and of whom I was fond. There were many women's luncheons. But the difficulty of getting around was too great, and I had to pass up many affairs I would have enjoyed. You just couldn't get around. Once when we were on our way to one of the most important ones--a friend was taking us, and her car broke down. She tried and tried to get it started. Then she couldn't even find a telephone. We were out on the road. So Ad and I got out and thumbed a ride to the convention. Though I hated to leave her alone with a stalled car, I had to get to the convention.

That was the first of my "thumb-riding" of which I will tell you at a later date.

So that finishes the convention. I guess we go into the campaign.





### The Campaign

Shirpser: I didn't have a really significant role in the campaign. I worked hard, but it was more in the fund-raising department. The times I enjoyed, were when national officials, senators, governors and congressmen came to my area, because then I was always included in everything they did. Stevenson was here. Estes was here two or three times. I was always with them. I was always asked to join their party, which gave me great pleasure and satisfaction.

I was chairman of the Women's Division for Kennedy-Johnson in the East Bay, with headquarters on University Avenue in Berkeley. I was on the executive committees, and of course the finance committees. I seem to have organized quite a few meetings. I find a program for Kennedy-Johnson in 1960 where Eugene McCarthy spoke, which I organized at the Claremont Hotel. I find another one here where I organized a big luncheon in Alameda County in honor India Edwards. I arranged several meetings where Ted Kennedy spoke, accompanied by his beautiful wife, Joan. Ted was in charge of Jack's campaign in California and other Western states, and I found him delightful to work with, and most cooperative.

Chall: Was India on the National Committee?

Shirpser: India was then special consultant on youth employment to the Secretary of Labor, Willard Wirtz. She was also on the national campaign committee for Kennedy-Johnson. We had quite a good East Bay luncheon at the Athens Club in Oakland, and raised about \$1000 for the campaign. It was always good to have India here. She gave a fine speech. Here is a picture of the two of us, taken at the luncheon.

A New Democratic women's group was formed by Ann Alanson in San Francisco, to cover the Bay Area. She asked me to be a director, representing Alameda County.

So I was on several committees and fund drives and dinner meetings, especially the \$100-a-plate dinners. In the midst of this, I got a nice letter from Clair Engle who was then senator. Pat Brown was speaking for preserving historical sites and buildings, et. I was the chairman of a committee that was supporting the California Heritage Council on whose board I served for several years. Augustus Keane who was a very distinguished attorney in Alameda County (he had served in many



Shirpser: international posts) asked me to take this responsibility. Clair Engle was working on a bill which would permit parts of the San Francisco Presidio to be used for parks and to preserve the San Francisco Palace of Fine Arts. So Clair was glad that I was interested in this issue and said he would keep me apprised, and he did send me a wire that "The Senate Armed Services Committee favorably recorded HR 8024 granting the Presidio property to the San Francisco Palace of Fine Arts."

When you participate with civic organizations, these political connections are often a real help in being able to accomplish good results.

Then, the Key Women for Kennedy was organized. The opening affair was a party at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Tony Curtis (who was Janet Leigh, an actress), in Beverly Hills. Guests of honor were Mr. and Mrs. Peter Lawford. She was Jack Kennedy's sister. And the key entertainer was Frank Sinatra.

Chall: How times have changed!

Shirpser: I wrote on here, "Where is Lyndon Johnson?" Because only Jack Kennedy is listed on that invitation. It doesn't mention Johnson in the invitation, which had quite a long list of sponsors.

Chall: Did Lyndon Johnson campaign at all in California?

Shirpser: Oh, yes. I always saw him when he was here. We had a friendly relationship. I have many letters from him too, scattered through this scrapbook.

Then I found a letter from Micky Polan [Dr. Lincoln Polan] who was Estes' national treasurer. He is a distinguished physicist and lives in West Virginia. We were very close friends, he and his wife, Nancy. He asked me to help Mr. Sidney Salomon, treasurer of the national campaign finance committee. Micky liked Lyndon Johnson and worked in his campaigns. He asked me to give him a list of names in California who would be available to assist him. Again, I was trying to raise funds for the National Committee, and I had some success. The money was needed, and so, I said I would accept his invitation.

Estes was working very hard for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket. They asked him to do so, and he cooperated again as he always did. I find here a letter from Libby Smith who was national committeewoman then. She was telling me that she was glad that



Shirpser: I arranged for the Polse-Loube luncheon for Estes at \$100-a-couple, at Norman Polse's home. They had a perfectly beautiful lunch affair. Ad and I were also host and hostess, but they did the whole thing themselves, and insisted that I enjoy myself this time and not do any work. They made a substantial sum. About a hundred couples were there at \$100-a-couple. The Polses and the Loubes donated all the food and the service. They even sent me an orchid corsage. That was a happy occasion for me, as it always was when Estes was around. He was so tired that Norman's father, Harry, said, "You need a rest," and he dragged Estes away from all the people, put him upstairs in a bedroom closed the door and Estes fell fast asleep. Harry wouldn't let anyone disturb him for about forty minutes, which was one of the kindest things you could have done. Estes didn't ever spare himself.

Chall: Was he campaigning for the senate as well?

Shirpser: No, by then he had won the Tennessee primary. So he had no worries about the general election, since the primary victory was tantamount to election.

On this same trip, Estes spoke to a University of California student body meeting in Wheeler Auditorium. By then we were "respectable." We were allowed on the campus, and the University had the different candidates come and talk to the student body. Estes got an enormous crowd. It was a very fine meeting. Estes spoke strongly on civil rights. He explained that even in Tennessee which is a southern state you could support the principles in which you believed which are basic to democracy, and still get elected.

This was a very telling thing for the students to hear. They often were told, "You have to compromise. You must be expedient, or you can't get elected." There was Estes, living proof that you could. He got a tremendous ovation. Glenn Seaborg was the chairman, and I was invited to sit on the platform, too. We had a private visit with him first. He took Estes on a little sightseeing tour and invited me to accompany them. There were at least two occasions that I remember that Estes was here to campaign for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket.

Lucretia was chairman of an extremely large Democratic Women's meeting for Mrs. Rose Kennedy, who was in San Francisco campaigning for her son Jack. She looks young, and she is so vigorous. She speaks with force and clarity. You just couldn't



Shirpser: believe her age. Of course, Lucretia wanted me on that executive committee and I helped her organize the reception for Mrs. Kennedy.

Lucretia really delegated responsibility. You work, if you are on Lucretia Grady's committees. She wrote me a lovely letter about my role in Mrs. Kennedy's reception and how grateful she was. She always signed it, "Your own Lucretia." We two were like family.

This was a very difficult campaign in California. For instance, Jess Unruh was the campaign chairman for Southern California. He had been one of the first to come out for Kennedy. He had fought the clubs and they disliked him.

Chall: Was this from the beginning?

Shirpser: As far back as I can remember, they never got along well together. In Southern California where the big vote is, a man whom the clubs did not like became the chairman of the Southern California campaign.

Another thing, I marked as one of our problems--Adlai Stevenson came to California at least twice. He could have had enormous meetings. Instead of that, some of the Kennedy people were afraid that Stevenson was too popular in California and that the net effect might be bad. So they scheduled him for a big beach party in Southern California when he could have spoken with such magnificence to a crowded Hollywood Bowl audience for Kennedy. Adlai was working whole-heartedly for Kennedy.

Chall: Who else would the Democrats have voted for? It doesn't make sense.

Shirpser: They probably didn't want Adlai to make a tremendous impact. You're not putting the best interests of your party ahead of your own personal inclinations when you do things like that.

There was quite a hassle about Lieutenant Governor Glenn Anderson. He was head of the Stevenson Club movement. I was told that Bobby Kennedy didn't want to appoint him to a campaign post, but Glenn was appointed. That helped the club movement resolve itself to support Kennedy.

Chall: What paper is that from?





Shirpser: It looks like the New York Times. It's a long article. This is the second part; it started on the front page. Everything they are saying is true. I kept speaking of the need for unity, unity, until I got so sick of the word I could hardly utter it. But you had to, because California was terribly split.

When Jack Kennedy was here to campaign, we always had tremendous crowds, much acclaim. He always spoke extremely well. He was most friendly and cooperative.

I thought of a funny thing just now. The big Kennedy reception at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco had lines of people stretched all through the lobby from the sidewalks, to meet Jack Kennedy and shake hands with him. Jack and Jackie were both here. About a half-hour had gone by and Jackie had not appeared. I was standing in the receiving line near Jack. Everyone was saying, "Where's Jackie?" Where's Jackie?"

I turned to Jack. I was near enough so I could talk to him and I said, "Everyone is asking about Jackie. Why isn't she here?" He said, "She evidently doesn't want to come down." I said, "I really think you ought to get her here. After all, you want to create goodwill." He said, "Will you go up and ask her?" I said, "No, she wouldn't pay any attention to me." He said something like this, "I've got news for you. She doesn't to me, either."

This sounded like President Truman with his daughter, Margaret. Jack used almost the identical words President Truman had done. So I said, "Please send someone to whom she'll pay some attention. Really, we ought to get her down here." So, I think Jack finally went. Jackie did come then, but in a sulky mood, and she was almost uncommunicative. Somebody would say something nice to her and she would say [brusquely], "Thank you." "No." or "Yes." She was not gracious, not friendly. She was one of the hardest campaign wives to get along with I have ever known in my life.

Chall: Was she like that whenever you saw her? She didn't like this role?

Shirpser: No, she just liked the privileges and not the responsibilities.

Another thing I remember. It was my first real knowledge of Ted Kennedy and Joan, who were out here campaigning for Jack. He was only twenty-seven years old at the time. He was in charge of either seven or eight Western states for the Kennedy campaigns.



Shirpsen: He worked very hard. I had a high opinion of him. He would sometimes turn to me for advice. From a Kennedy this was almost unbelievable! He would say, "I'm going to speak at such and such a place. What issues do you think they would like me to talk about?" Or, "How long do you think I ought to speak?" Or, "Who are the leaders I should contact in that district?" It really was an unusual situation where a famous young man such as Ted Kennedy would turn to an older woman who had had previous political experience. I did my very best to help him. I organized a number of meetings at which he spoke. Libby had charge of his schedule. But she was glad to turn some of the Bay area over to me. She was traveling nationally with Kennedy much of the time.

There's a picture I value very much, which was taken at a women's meeting I organized for Ted Kennedy. First, I like it because he is looking at me with an affectionate gaze, and secondly, because I look so slim alongside another woman in the picture who must have weighed over two hundred pounds!

I have a fine letter from Ted written at the end of this campaign. I must speak of Joan, too. Because she was very young and eager to do a good job. She would call me sometimes from out of the state, and say, "I think my first California meeting is next week, and maybe I won't see you in time. Suppose they call on me. What do you think I ought to say, Clara?" And, "What do you think I ought to wear?" She would often confer with me. I always saw to it that she was called on for a few remarks, because she was so beautiful, and glamorous, and just as sweet and friendly as she could be. The contrast between her and Jackie could not have been more strong.

I really liked both of them, and I thought Ted was most capable. It certainly appeared that there was a great future ahead for Ted. It's rather doubtful now, isn't it? I do think he is an excellent senator.

Those are some of the highlights I remember. Frankly, I can't find the folder on the 1960 convention.

Chall: In what kind of position were you that the Kennedys would be conferring with you this way? It didn't sound as if you had a role with a title, the kind of thing which would give them access to you in this situation. And you didn't get along with Libby Smith that well, did you?



Shirpsen: I was Women's Chairman for Alameda County, for the Kennedy-Johnson campaign. Libby and I were not as friendly as I wished we could be, and she didn't include me very much, but the Kennedys did. They were very nice about it, particularly Ted. Jack always let me know when he was coming and invited me to confer with him, and to participate in his meetings. You see, I had been national committeewoman quite recently. They knew I had a lot of friends and supporters in the Stevenson and the Kefauver camps.

Chall: So they knew what was politically wise to do.

Shirpsen: My being in the receiving line meant that Stevenson people and Kefauver people probably were for him, too. Then, too, I had been on the 1960 delegation. I wrote Jack a friendly letter, offering my help when he won the nomination. I got a most friendly reply. So I think I was one of the people they turned to, and I was on several area committees. Often, in the private room preceding the dinner where the people at the head table meet--even if I wasn't at the head table, I was invited to that private room gathering as a rule. Somebody would see to it. I was very busy; I worked very hard.

Chall: As far as the election was concerned, as I understand it, Kennedy lost to Nixon in California.

Shirpsen: By 35,000 votes. I found a clipping.

Chall: How do you account for that?

Shirpsen: The California Democratic party was so busy fighting with each other that they didn't work as hard for the candidate as they should have done. That happens so often in California. I know Pat Brown was very frustrated at the results. I wrote to Bobby Kennedy during the campaign. I was disturbed at what was happening in California, and I urged him to spend more time here, to have Jack Kennedy in person here more often, to send their best leaders out here. I was terribly concerned and in the letter I explained some of the things that I thought were hurting the campaign.

Losing a state the size of California by 35,000 votes, was a terrible disappointment.

Chall: A state that is Democratic three-two.

Shirpsen: Or maybe it was even more than that then.



The White House Conference on Aging: The Battle for Medicare

Shirpser: I came to Washington, D.C. about a week before the Jack Kennedy's inauguration, as a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging.

Chall: Who appointed you to that? Eisenhower was still in office.

Shirpser: First there was a statewide Conference on Aging called by Pat Brown. Pat asked me to be a delegate, knowing of my work at Herrick Hospital. This is the seventeenth year I have been the president of a women's group in Herrick Hospital, and my political background has helped the hospital several times. Then, at the governor's recommendation, President Eisenhower invited me to be a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging.

After being in hospital work and seeing how many people couldn't stay in the hospital as long as they should, because of lack of funds, I became aware of the vital need for Medicare. Often, they would run out of funds when they were half way through rehabilitation, and they had gone through painful treatments getting to that point. Maybe they would only have two or three weeks more to go to complete their rehabilitation therapy, and there was no money available. This was especially true of elderly people.

On the flight to Washington was Herman Gallegos, who is an American of Mexican descent, very able, and very intelligent. We sat together and discussed what we were planning to do, and promised to confer with each other at the White House Conference.

I think we all stayed at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C. The meetings took place there.

I decided to go on the committee which dealt with Medicare. I have a lot of literature you might find helpful, programs, and agendas, discussions, and speeches; and material on the way the convention was organized.

It was divided up this way. First you met in what were called "work groups." I think there were twenty-eight in our group. Then, perhaps half of the delegates to the convention met in two separate parts, and then the whole convention met together at the end, which was called a "plenary session."





Shirpsen: When we arrived in Washington at the airport, all the newspapers had four-inch headlines: "IKE SAYS MEDICARE IS DOOMED." This really boomeranged. Because here we were, spending our own funds to cross the whole United States, staying in an expensive hotel, buying expensive meals, having to go in taxis. (The meetings sometimes were held in big auditoriums and there was a concert held in a place quite far away from the Shoreham Hotel.) It was costing us at least \$50 a day for the five days, besides our plane fare. And we were told when we arrived to discuss this most important question of the whole convention that Medicare was "doomed," before we even met or discussed it.

This was frustrating, to say the least, particularly from a man who is himself the best evidence of the value of so-called "socialized medicine." He had probably rarely been to a private doctor while in the army, and later when he was in the presidency. For the rest of the people who are suffering illness or dying because they cannot afford medical care, that becomes "socialized medicine," and "Ike says Medicare is doomed."

Herman Gallegos and I looked at each other and said: "This is really going to spur us on!" We were in different groups, but we both chose the Medicare phase in committees. Then I read a column by my good friends, Bob Allen and Ruth Finney, that this convention had been "stacked" by Eisenhower and his secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. There was a greater proportion of doctors and insurance men than of any other group in the United States. Therefore, it was going to be extremely hard to accomplish anything that was constructive, from our point of view.

We heard a speech by President Eisenhower. I must read you a paragraph from the California Medical Association that I found infuriating. It says, "Let us invest the elderly with a cloak of honor and distinction which is their due. Let us accord them that which can serve them best in sharing with us the combined fruits of our endeavors. Pity, no. Recognition, yes. Indulgence in self-pity, no. Love, consideration, good will, and understanding, yes. Alms-giving, no. Social recognition and humanity, yes."

That was from the president of the California Medical Association. But not a word of giving them Medicare so that they can overcome sickness and live in health.



Shirpser: We met at this work group level. Out of about twenty-eight in one group, five were doctors, perhaps five were insurance men. There was one person representing an association of elderly citizens, one from a public assistance group, three laymen, one from The Business and Professional Women's Club, and a couple of men from organized labor. In my group there was an especially effective man who was the head of the Public Health Department from the state of Michigan. I knew Governor "Soapy" Williams well, Neal Staebler, and other Michigan officials. So when I heard where he was from and what his post was, I told him who I was. He had heard of me, too, and we worked well together. He was so well informed, intelligent and capable. He, of course, knew the scientific data that I didn't. So that was most helpful for me.

We got a very good recommendation out of our group, finally. The one Herman Gallegos was in, voted favorably, too; also, some of the others were coming out quite well. Our group agreed that "existing medical help for the totally indigent is inadequate, should be improved, expanded, and extended."

We came out with the recommendation for Medicare financed by social security.

Chall: The whole conference?

Shirpser: No, the first stop was in our group and many other groups voted favorably, too.

Senator Pat MacNamara was introducing a bill in the Senate, and I evidently was writing back and forth to him, because he wrote me that I had been of great help. He introduced the bill for financing medical care through social security, about the same time as our White House Conference on Aging.

Of course, Estes introduced a bill, too. With him sponsoring the bill were Wayne Morse, Warren Magnuson, Eugene McCarthy, Frank Church and Hubert Humphrey. Then Congressman Wayne Hayes of Ohio with Bernie Sisk, Harlan Hagan, John Moss, Jeff Cohelan, and George P. Miller introduced a similar bill about January 5, 1961.

Senator Pat MacNamara was chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Problems of the Aged and Aging. Among the main things there, which I have marked, were: to provide for 90 days of hospital



Shirpsen: care per year, 180 days care in a skilled nursing home, or 240 days of care at home in a supervised home health program, diagnostic outpatient services, etc. A whole list of services were included. That was really a good, comprehensive bill. It was to be financed through social security. There would be pre-paid health insurance, and it would cover men over sixty-five, women over sixty-two.

Then our White House Conference on Aging went into the bi-conference meeting and there was strong argument and protest from many of the doctors. I thought the insurance people were even worse than the doctors. They were so lacking in humanity, and in understanding of the problem. What they did was to condemn "socialized medicine;" but little that was constructive, no good alternatives; just voluntary private insurance. When you said, "How can people afford to pay that?" The answer was, "They could if they saved in their early years and then they would have it when they got older."

So we came into the last plenary session and we had worked very hard. I can't tell you how many midnight caucuses we had. I was working with some young men who I thought were wonderful. They were from Walter Reuther's United Auto Workers. They knew parliamentary procedure. They were articulate and bright and good-looking and friendly, and it was a joy to work with them. They were a challenge to everyone. I thought they were one of the outstanding groups of the whole convention. They were objective; you could talk with them; they welcomed new ideas. They would give you their ideas. I don't remember another five-day convention in my experience where there was such camaraderie and give-and-take, cooperation, and continual awareness of our objectives, and few personality clashes.

In the final plenary session, after long debate, the vote was in favor of Medicare, amid much applause, and the joy of accomplishment. Everyone wanted to leave and go out and celebrate our victory. I begged these young men from organized labor particularly, "It's not going to be so easy. I believe that something is going to happen to stop us before this session ends. I've been to other conventions where there were planned last-minute upsets."

Chall: You mean on the floor?

Shirpsen: The main thing we were working for had been passed and people started to leave. Everybody said, "We won. Come on, Clara,



Shirpsen: let's go out and celebrate." Everybody was excited and happy.

I had a presentiment. I had been to too many political conventions. I said, "In case something happens, we have to stay right here for a while longer. We've got to keep a majority here or we may find that the ground has been cut right under us." I said, "Please believe me. We've got to be here until the final adjournment takes place."

My friends were angry with me. Everybody said, "We've worked so hard. Let's have some fun, now that it's over." Then, the chairman of the conference said, "I have a message for you from the President of the United States, Dwight Eisenhower." And he read us this message which was in patronizing language; as I remember it was to this effect: "I ask you to reconsider what you have done. I ask you to bear in mind the full implication of what you have passed as a recommendation establishing Medicare." He went on giving the reasons why he thought what we had done was wrong and then he concluded, "I ask you to reconsider your recommendation."

Well, there was pandemonium on the floor. Immediately, a delegate got up and moved that we reconsider, it was seconded and the chairman called for the vote. So I jumped up. My League of Women Voters' training helped. I said, "Mr. Chairman." And everybody around me yelled, "Point of order." The chairman recognized me and I said, "Mr. Chairman, as I remember parliamentary law, that motion can't be accepted unless the man who made it had voted for the original motion." So the chairman asked the man and he had not voted for the original motion, so his motion to reconsider was invalid.

Immediately, somebody else jumped up who had voted for the original motion, and made the motion to reconsider. So I stood up again and raised my hand asking to be heard by the chairman; and people around me shouted, "Point of order." So the chairman had to recognize me before he called for the vote. I said, "Point of order. I request that the parliamentarian give us his or her decision as to whether or not this motion to reconsider requires a two-thirds vote. I think it does."

The chairman was quite furious, I think. It was all cut and dried; it was going to sail right through and here I stood, a thorn in their side. The chairman said, "Well, if we must. It's late, but we'll get the parliamentarian to give us his decision." He found that the parliamentarian had left the





Shirpser: conference. We had to sit there for about a half-hour, late at night, while they found a parliamentarian. He came, and he ruled it took a two-thirds vote. They couldn't get the two-thirds vote, but they did get a majority vote to reconsider.

Many people who had worked for five days to recommend a Medicare Health plan and thought they had won, had already left. The opposition would have won if it had taken a simple majority vote. They could not win the the two-thirds vote requirement. I may have asked somebody else to ask the second question. It's not clear in my mind at this late date. But I certainly motivated the second question about the two-thirds vote being necessary to reconsider.

Therefore, we came out of that convention as the first major group in the whole United States, which represented the broadest possible cross section of the country (despite too much representation in the large numbers of doctors and insurance delegates). We came out strongly for Medicare for the aged that would be financed under social security. That gave impetus to the passage of Medicare, and made it easier for Congress to get a majority vote for Medicare insurance.

There was every effort to block Medicare in the White House Conference on Aging. I can't tell you how many people were lobbying there, including administration people. Former secretary of HEW, I think his name was Folsom [Marion B.], came out for Medicare in the midst of the convention, which was a big help. There was strong labor representation in the conference and a former secretary of labor endorsed Medicare, too.

Chall: It was a private statement of theirs?

Shirpser: It was given publicity. I don't know if they were at the convention, but I know their favorable opinions got headlines in the press.

So it was a very exciting convention. Fortunately, the inauguration wasn't taking place for a few days, so I could get some rest.

Maybe we had better get into the inauguration of Jack Kennedy now.



The Inauguration of John F. Kennedy

Chall: You had an invitation to the inauguration before you went to the Conference on Aging? How did you get this?

Shirpser: It came from Jack Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, an invitation to come to the inauguration. Then I started getting many invitations to various functions in connection with the inauguration. I have this whole book which is full of all the invitations, and also contains many clippings. It is the official inaugural book.

Probably everyone who came to the inauguration with an official invitation received them, too. When I went to the National Committee (Washington, D.C.) headquarters of the Inauguration Committee, I was given a large envelope. I brought it back to our hotel room. Ad and I went through it quickly. I think I was hanging up clothing in the closet when Ad said to me, "Did anybody ask you if you would allow your name to be used on the Inauguration Committee?" I said, "I wish they had! I would have been delighted." He said, "Well, your name is on the Inauguration Committee and they had a hell of a nerve to do that without your permission." I said, "Let me see. I can't believe it." I don't remember how many people were on the Inauguration Committee, maybe 150. I'm guessing, I don't remember.

I never have known who put me on that committee list. I assume it was Estes, because he always included me, if it were possible. Lindy Boggs, Congressman Hale Boggs' wife, was the co-chairman of the Inaugural Ball, and we were very good friends, so she may have done it. Anyway, it was done by somebody who cared about me.

Chall: Besides your name on that select committee...

Shirpser: Oh--there were so many "goodies." Many invitations went only to the members of the Inauguration Committee. For instance, we were given reserved seats (we paid for them), we were placed opposite the reviewing stand for the parade, right opposite President Kennedy for the inauguration ceremonies. I was assigned a box at the Inaugural Ball to which I could ask my friends to join me. I was asked to sit in the governor's box at the Governors' Reception.

One invitation was to "a distinguished ladies' reception" at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. That was the



Shirpser: first time a U.S. Marine in dress uniform took me by the arm and escorted me to the various receiving lines; while the military band was playing.

Chall: What was your husband doing while all this was going on?

Shirpser: He came with me to all of these functions, except the "distinguished ladies' reception." There was a marvelous concert at which Mrs. Roosevelt was the chairman, and spoke. There was an Inaugural Gala at the Armory. Things were going on all day and most of the night.

One of the bonuses for being on the Inaugural Committee was this license plate. It says, "District of Columbia, Inauguration 1961." There are holes on it so you could slide it over the license plate of any car you were in, and you could park any place with that special Inaugural Committee license.

In a crowded place like Washington, D.C. during that inauguration, it was worth its weight in "platinum." You could put it on a taxi license, so he could drive you right to the door. You could put it on a friend's car. You could go into a restricted parking area. It was the most valuable possession I could have at that time and place.

#### Parties and Parades: Coping with the History-Making Snowstorm

Shirpser: What happened was that a dreadful storm hit Washington, worse than ever before in history. I have never seen anything like it before, or since--even in the mountains. The rain came down in torrents, and then blinding snowstorms. The day of the Governors' Reception, which was the first day of the inaugural events, we had lunch in the House Dining Room at the Capitol with our congressman, Jeff Cohelan. We didn't know then that it was storming because we were inside the Capitol building. Jeff took us to the door of the Capitol to get a taxi, and we looked out and we couldn't believe our eyes. Everything was covered with a thick blanket of snow. In the two and a half hours we had been with him sightseeing inside the Capitol, and having lunch, everything was now white, and to a depth of several feet. It was unbelievable. There were practically no taxis and the wind was howling.



Shirpser: So Jeff went back to his office and phoned every taxi company. We must have waited an hour until a taxi finally came. The driver was most belligerent--I think he was half-drunk; it was very cold and he probably had been drinking. He drove like a madman, skidding all over the place. He started up a hill and then skidded all the way down again. We were really terrified.

I'm not used to snowstorms, you know. It was coming at us with strong winds, so that the driver couldn't even keep the windshield clear. He asked if we were Democrats and we said "yes." He said, "I'm a Republican," in a hostile tone of voice. By the time we got to the Governors' Reception it must have taken an hour to cover the distance that would normally have taken ten minutes. It was late afternoon by then.

I said, "Let's go in, but I don't think we are ever going to leave this building, though, the way that snow is coming down." Practically everything had stopped running. Few autos or buses were being driven, except where some VIP, in a limousine, probably with an escort who was breaking trail for them.

So we got to the Governors' Reception. We kind of forgot all about the weather, and enjoyed ourselves. It was a beautifully organized and elegant reception, and we met many friends from all over the United States. After it was over, we came to the lobby of the hotel, and as far as you could see, cars were stuck in the snow. Nothing was running. Admirals, and governors, and senators were running all around trying to find their cars. I saw Nancy Kefauver. She was like an island in the midst of a stormy sea. I rushed to her and said, "Nancy, how are we going to get out of here?" She said, "Come with me, Clara and Ad, I have a navy car and a driver. But," she said, "he hasn't showed up and I don't know that he ever is going to arrive. Look what's going on outside. There has never been anything like this in all the years I've lived here in Washington." We waited and waited and waited. Nancy started to get nervous because Estes and she were giving a big party at the Willard Hotel to which we were invited, too. It was for Tennesseans, mostly, but also for their close friends. She said, "If I don't get there, Estes is going to kill me. I have to be there."

Finally, some people got their cars out, somehow. Everybody with shovels was digging everybody else out. So the car for Nancy came at least and we were happy to get into it. An hour later we had only gone three blocks. Try to visualize a corner that you came to with cars stuck in the middle of the street, north,





Shirpsen: south, east, and west, and nothing moving. And that's the way it was at every corner. I had galoshes on but the snow by that time was three or four feet deep.

So our car just crept along and Nancy was really upset because she knew she was supposed to be at their party at the Willard Hotel, and she was already very late. Ad and I didn't care if we didn't get to their party. We just wanted to get back alive to our hotel.

We were supposed to go to the Inaugural Concert that night, and had \$100 seats. Somebody had given us the tickets. Of course, we could not get there. That was the one where Mrs. Roosevelt was chairman.

So finally the navy driver said, "Oh, my God, we've run out of gas." Nancy said, "Clara, I've got to leave you. I'm within walking distance of the hotel and I've got high boots and a fur coat, and a big hood for my head, and an umbrella." I said, "What will we do? It will be ice cold with the motor off." Our hotel was much further away. She said, "I wish I knew what to tell you, Clara. I hate to desert you like this. But what can I do?"

So she left, and we sat in the car and the driver went to phone the navy base to see if another car would come and tow him, but how they would get to him we didn't know. So we sat in the car and thought, "Maybe somebody in a car will come by whom we know." We didn't know what to do; we were like babes-in-the woods. You can't imagine the terror of that snow and wind and cold. Ad got out two or three times, hoping that somebody would drive by whom we knew. He would return to the car almost frozen. So finally when we were so cold we couldn't sit still any more, we did get out into the street. And that's when I started thumbing a ride! Car after car went by and they were all jammed--people sitting on each other's laps because everybody picked up everybody they could fit into their cars.

Finally a car came by that was exceptionally long, an older car. It was full of men. It stopped right in front of me. I said to this man in the front seat: "We're from California. We don't have snow where we live. We don't know what to do. We're freezing cold and desperate. Can't you please pick us up?" So he said, "Sure, get in, sister." They had two jump seats--you can imagine how old a car it was. We were so thankful to get in. We were absolutely shaking with cold. My feet were numb.



Shirpser: I thought I was frost-bitten. Snow had come in over the top of my galoshes, and my feet were in icy water in the soles of my shoes.

They had a whisky bottle, and they were all drinking. They would pass the bottle around. We drank from the bottle, too. It's the first and last time I've ever done that in my life. Six men and me passing around and drinking from a whisky bottle!

The bottle was soon empty, but we were getting into a more populated area by that time, and they would find a liquor store or bar and go in and buy a new bottle.

Chall: Who were these men?

Shirpser: They were all labor officials. They were all headed for some big meeting, too, and I told them of my friends in organized labor in California. I knew most of the Who's Who in the labor division in California, because I had always worked with them. So I could tell them about Robert Ash, George Johns, George Hardy, William Kilpatrick, and they were most kind and cordial to us.

We finally arrived at our hotel about nine o'clock that night. We hadn't had any dinner, and we had been hours getting from the Governors' Reception to our hotel; normally a few minutes taxi ride. Oh, I kissed them all "goodbye" and thanked them fervently. Were we pals at that point!

Chall: How long had you been in the car with them?

Shirpser: About three hours. I think we left the Governors' Reception at 5 o'clock and maybe we got in their car at 6:00 or 6:30. These men got out and shoved the car sometimes. They had a shovel. They dug the wheels out. That's the only way we ever got to our hotel.

The lobby at the hotel was so full you could hardly fight your way in. Hundreds of people--perhaps thousands--slept on the floor of hotel lobbies that night. They couldn't get to Georgetown and to Alexandria, Virginia, and to all the suburban places where they lived. Nothing was running, no busses, no taxis. I don't know how anybody ever got to a depot, or whether the trains were still running.

We got to our room, got out of our clothes, took hot baths. Then, it was about ten o'clock. I said, "I'm starved." And Ad



Shirpser: said, "So am I." So I rang for room service. They laughed in my face, saying, "There's not one scrap of food in the whole hotel. It's all gone." I said, "There must be something in the kitchen." He said, "Lady, if you want to go down to the kitchen and you can find anything there, it's yours." I said to Ad, "I'm going to the kitchen of this hotel and find some food for us."

So I put on my housecoat and a street coat over it. I wasn't going to get dressed all over again. I went down in the elevator into the kitchen. I opened one refrigerator after another. I found a whole apple pie. I kept looking, and I found some cheese. There was a coffee pot on the stove, so I lit the gas and heated it. I found a tray and I carried the apple pie and the cheese, and the coffee pot with plates and cups upstairs to our room. It must have been near midnight by then. That's what we had for dinner.

The next morning, of course, there was no breakfast. Every bit of food in the hotel was gone.

Chall: How did you even get out?

Shirpser: We phoned friends who managed to bring us some food and showed us how to "cope" in this kind of situation.

We came in late from some event one night earlier in the week, and someone yelled, "Hello, Clara." And there was Art Hoppe sitting in the lobby, looking dejected. I said, "What are you doing here?"

Chall: This was before the snowstorm?

Shirpser: Yes. He said, "Well, it's the usual foul-up in the Democratic party. I haven't got a hotel room." I said, "You haven't got a room, and you're here as official correspondent?" He said, "Yep, here's my press badge. It didn't do me a damn bit of good. I'm going to have to sleep in the lobby until I get too tired, and then I'm going to turn around and go home and not report any more of this inauguration."

I said, "Wait a minute, Art." I knew that they had to be working late that night at headquarters with the ball coming soon. Then, I told him the problems we had had! There was pandemonium at headquarters. Art Hoppe wrote an article about it later. He was so grateful to me that he wrote a column about



Shirpser: me, too. He said that I, who was a member of the Inaugural Committee, had stood in line for hours at headquarters and I still didn't have my tickets for the ball, nor for the concert, which was then true. Anyway, I did get him a hotel room. He had to share it with somebody, but was he delighted! To be a correspondent in Washington without a room is an impossible situation. How do you take a shower? How do you shave? How do you get dressed?

Chall: How did you get him a room?

Shirpser: Through the National Committee. I phoned, and said: "Art Hcppe is one of the most important columnists in California. You really must get him a room. I'm going to stay right here on the phone until you tell me that you've got one for him." That's where it comes in handy to know "the right people." Whoever it was in headquarters knew me, and knew I wouldn't demand this unless it were really important.

There was a luncheon where Mrs. Agnes Meyer spoke (publisher of the Washington Post). Another reception was at the Women's Democratic National Club. I had many invitations. I'll go all through them with you later.

Here's a letter from Jack Kennedy acknowledging my congratulations to them when their son was born. The child was born November 25, 1960, and the inauguration was January 16, 1961.

The morning after the Governors' Reception when we had gotten stuck and dined on apple pie, there was the Inaugural Parade. We got dressed to go. We had reserved seats in the best reviewing stand in Washington. It was an historic event. We had to get there. We could not get a taxi, not even a car and driver could be hired. We were desperate. We had paid \$25 apiece for the tickets and we wanted to see this historic parade and inauguration ceremony, once in our lifetime. We certainly couldn't walk from our hotel. I didn't have high boots, and where could I buy boots at a time like this?

So we just gave up and went back to our room. We could see the parade because we had a corner room. Several friends called and asked how we were doing? We certainly told them in colorful language what we thought of their weather. One of them was Dana Brantley and his wife. Dana was with the International Monetary Fund. We had invited them to sit in our box at the Inaugural Ball later that week. I told Dana, "I'd be delighted to give you





Shirpser: our two tickets for the reviewing stand. But I want something to eat. We haven't had breakfast." Dana said, "All over Washington, everybody is stuck. You're not prepared for it. You're not used to it. Just stay in your room, and we'll manage to get to you." He and his wife came loaded with food and liquor. I think Hank Grady, Jr. was in Washington then, because I remember introducing him to Dana and it must have been then.

By the time the parade began one friend had told another, and I think there were ten or twelve people in our room. We were eating and we were drinking. I guess I had a scotch and soda for breakfast, potato chips, whatever anybody handed me. After the conventions I've attended, I knew you take what you can get when you can get it. We had a television set in our room, and our windows faced the street where the parade was taking place. So--between the two, we managed to see most of the parade--and watched the inauguration ceremony on TV--and listened to Jack Kennedy's great inaugural speech.

I was determined that I was not going to miss the Inaugural Ball. Dana said (through the International Monetary Fund they had cars and drivers for the VIP's who come to Washington) that he would get a car and driver and I could absolutely rely on him, and we would get to the main ball at the Armory.

We had some other friends who also needed transportation, and so I think about four or perhaps six of us went to the ball together in the car we hired. The car came and the driver knew how to handle the situation. He had special snow tires and chains.

Chall: By that time they had swept off the most important streets, I presume.

Shirpser: No, because the snow kept falling. But we did get to the ball, much the worse for wear, but we got there. Once we were inside we found our box. It was a good box, and we could see everything. It was a wonderful occasion, with many, many beautifully dressed people. You kept seeing senators, and governors, and congressmen, and cabinet officials. We were near the center of that vast hall, so we could see the whole inaugural party when they made their entrance.

Of course Jackie was gloriously gowned and made a very dramatic entrance with Jack, and they received a big ovation. It was fun to be part of it. We danced a lot. People would cut in on you. It was really a lovely time.



Shirpser: Then we were supposed to meet the people who came with us so we could go back together to our hotels. So we got to the lobby of the Armory, and it was the worst crush I have ever seen in my life. Nothing was moving outside, absolutely nothing. The storm had gotten even worse. You just stood there helpless. Everybody was standing in line. Everybody was muffled to the eyes. I saw George Killion at one point running up and down, in formal "tails," you know, looking for his car. He had an official car and driver. I saw a general, I saw an admiral, hatless, with the snow beating on them, looking for their car and driver. No cars came.

Chall: Reduced to ordinary souls.

Shirpser: A bus came along. The people with us ran for it. They had boots. I just couldn't go fast enough with my slippers full of snow, and the bus door slammed in my face. In the meantime, I had gotten myself soaking wet. I was wearing high heels and silk slippers.

I said, "Let's see if anything is running. Maybe somebody will pick us up. We might as well stay out here in the snow. I'm soaked, anyway." So we stood there with the snow beating on us with a few cars coming by and again, I was "thumbing a ride." Finally a car stopped. They took pity on us and had room in their car, and they promised to drive us to our hotel.

We stopped and started. It took us hours to get to our hotel. Of course, I had the flu by the next morning. That was really the most horrendous weather. I wouldn't have believed it, if I hadn't been there. They had fire trucks out on the street all night long with sirens blowing, towing cars away. That was the only way they could clear the streets to tow away thousands of cars which were stranded. Sometimes people said they couldn't find their car for days. Because everything that could move was on the street that night trying to clear the street and tow cars away; those big shovel scoops that push everything in front of them were working. You couldn't sleep for the racket they were making with sirens and grinding noises. It was the wildest, most exhausting, and the most exciting time I ever spent, I think.

Chall: Normally it would be wild enough.

Shirpser: Yes, just to get some place if it was cold and windy was a problem in that crowd, but with that awful snow. They say



Shirpser: Washington is like that when it snows hard. In New York, they know how to handle the situation, or so they tell me. Thank goodness, I've never had to go through anything quite like that in New York. There, they clear the streets. But in Washington, it only gets like this once every ten year or so, I was told. The newspapers stated that was the heaviest snow, the worst storm they had ever had in the history of Washington, D.C. And all this was when Jack Kennedy was inaugurated.

Chall: I saw the inauguration on television and I remember that everybody was bundled up and cold, but I just don't remember anything about the snow.

Shirpser: There are all kinds of clippings here that tell of it. People really suffered. Only those people who were provided with boots and heavy coats, hoods, and mufflers, and all of that--who knew how to cope--could get around.

So we all watched it on television in our hotel room, with our friends. I had a transportation badge, if there had been anything running. We did not find our driver who was supposed to drive us back from the Inaugural Ball until the next day. He turned up with my galoshes and umbrella. I didn't have my galoshes with me when I left the Ball. I left my galoshes, umbrella, and raincoat with him in the car, because I still thought, "This man is reliable. He'll know how to pick us up." So I was standing in the snow in silk slippers and a long dress which was, of course, soaking wet to my thighs.

And this badge says, "a member of the Inaugural Committee!" The women members of the Inaugural Committee received a little gold charm and a little silver charm.

Chall: That was certainly an exciting experience.

Shirpser: This gives the program, and you can see the number of events: Monday, National Gallery of Art, 3-6 p.m. Inaugural Gala, National Guard Armory. The gala was only by special invitation, and the reception only by special invitation.

After I got the flu, I had to stay in bed for a couple of days, and had to break all dates in Washington, D.C. Fortunately, our hotel started functioning again with food and room service available.



XVI COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE 1960s  
(Interview 19, July 23, 1973)

The American Association for the United Nations

Shirpser: The UN organization of San Francisco had always been weak, had always been in financial trouble. It's such an ironical thing that this was the situation, when San Francisco is the birthplace of the United Nations.

But the World Affairs Council of Northern California is so strong, has so many wealthy and prestigious members, that it is very hard to have another international organization "flourish" in San Francisco. Some good friends of mine who realized that the local UN organization was in deep financial trouble and didn't seem to have enough people on the board who knew how to organize and how to raise funds, asked me in 1959 to come on the board of the AAUN and help them. Of course, I was glad to do that.

The International Film Festival in those days (in 1959) was also in trouble. I think the League of Women Voters had tried to sponsor it the year before, and had ended with a deficit.

Chairman of the Film Festival, 1959

Shirpser: So the AAUN wanted to sponsor the International Film Festival this time, and they asked me to be chairman. In a rash moment, I agreed to do it. I realized as soon as I got further into it, how little support I was going to get from the board of directors, in terms of contributions; and also the problems I was going to have with Irving Levine who was the one handling the actual films and procedures.





Shirpser:        So the only way I could see to keep my sanity and to make a success of it, was to bring in a great many friends, people outside of the AAUN, many of whom I had known in politics and whom I could depend upon. I formed a good, strong committee. I got the idea of working with all the foreign consuls, which turned out to be a good idea.

                 The procedure was: First we went to the Metro Theater, which was owned by Irving Levine, for the picture itself. It was The Mouse that Roared, a wonderful picture. Everybody came away from there feeling gay and laughing. Then we went to The Palace Hotel for a ball. We had filled all the tables in the large Garden Court, which was quite an achievement. We had all the consulates decorate their own tables. They formed a ring of decorated tables around the ballroom floor, which was very attractive. We gave a prize to the consul who received the most votes for the most attractive table. We had to work with many gimmicks. We had to get publicity, and all the time struggle with Mr. Levine.

                 We came out with a substantial profit. So, having proved I could do it, you see, from there on I was called on more and more by the AAUN.

                 It was a happy evening. Another thing we did: I got Lucretia Grady to be a member of my committee. She always cooperated with me and I with her, and we loved working together. Lucretia, at my request, called Spiros Skouras, head of a major motion picture studio in Hollywood, whom she had known through Henry Grady (her husband) having been ambassador to Greece.

                 So, for the first time we got Hollywood stars to come to the International Film Festival. They had boycotted the International Film Festival up till then. Mr. Skouras sent young, attractive "stars." Stuart Whitman was sitting next to me. He was charming, and agreed to help the AAUN in the future, too. There was stunning Jill St. John. I've forgotten who the other two were.

                 I was glad that I could produce a success for the AAUN, because they desperately needed money and more prestige locally.



Chairman of United Nations Day Celebration, 1961

Shirpser: Then we came to 1961. Again, the AAUN was broke. They had a budget, and they tried to live within it, but they always adopted unrealistic budgets in terms of what they could produce. The organization was small. It didn't really have enough members to take on big projects.

We were meeting as a board. George Hellyer was president until 1961. (Later that year Professor Urban Whitaker was elected.) George asked me if I would undertake another event for the AAUN that would produce a good sum. So I asked for suggestions. But I wanted them to think of big ideas, not just someone locally, but of national renown. So everybody came up with ideas of small, unimportant events. So finally I said, "How would you like to have Adlai Stevenson?"

I was met with an incredulous reaction. "If you think you can get Adlai Stevenson, by all means get him."

Chall: Was he already ambassador to the United Nations?

Shirpser: Yes. I said, "I know him well, I think I might be able to persuade him to come." Their reaction annoyed me, as if I were talking about the man in the moon. I knew Adlai well enough that he would give my invitation real consideration, and I also had a secret weapon that they didn't know about. He had a new grandson in San Francisco, John Fell and Natalie Stevenson's son. I knew Adlai was anxious to see his new grandson, and that I could get to him through Clayton Fritchey, his administrative assistant, and a good friend of mine.

Adlai Stevenson Agrees to Speak

Shirpser: So I wrote to Adlai and then phoned him. After some discussion, Adlai agreed to do it. Then the problem: This is a really big event--how are we going to finance it? The organization didn't have any money. I knew if we had Adlai, we wouldn't have any financial trouble. I said that I would get sponsors at \$100 each and asked, "How many on the board will be a sponsor? I think three or possibly four, out of perhaps thirty on the board, did agree to be sponsors."



Shirpser: I took on the task of calling over one hundred people and about eighty did become sponsors. In some cases I got double sponsors, man and wife. Then I asked Madeline Haas Russell if we could use her beautiful home with all its magnificent art treasures for a cocktail party and reception for Governor Stevenson to be attended by the sponsors' group. (It's natural for me to call him "Governor" because we always did, and he liked it.)

The way I arranged it, and "sold it" to them was that I said that we would sit down in groups of ten or twelve with Adlai. "You can talk with him, have about ten minutes with him, and then we'll have another group." I had cleared this with Adlai, previously.

So they could "dine out" for weeks or months--"Adlai told me--" etc. This had real attraction. And I did move each group after ten minutes. Of course, the unfortunate part of this was that almost everyone, instead of "asking" him questions, would make speeches, would tell him, which is "par for the course," seemingly.

Madeline's home looked so beautiful and she was such a gracious, lovely hostess. I arranged for Adlai to get there about ten minutes early so she could have a private talk with him. In fact, he was supposed to stay for dinner at Madeline's with Mr. and Mrs. Urban Whitaker and Ad and me, but at the last minute some of Adlai's friends "moved in" and insisted on having him. Adlai finally said he wanted to do it that way, too. So we did agree to that. But later this had disastrous consequences for me, as I'll tell you about it.

Chall: He agreed readily to come out here, no honorarium?

Shirpser: No. All we did was pay his expenses, which were considerable, because he traveled with his secretary, and we reserved a suite at the Fairmont Hotel, expecting to get a "bargain rate" because Ben Swig, the president of the Fairmont Hotel, was a good friend of Adlai's. I found out later that the suite cost \$125 a day! That was no bargain! It was a beautiful suite and I'm sure that was the regular price. We certainly had not anticipated that high fee.

Then, always there are many long distance calls when someone of his importance is here. They use the long distance phone often--it's almost inevitable.





THE SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER  
of the  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

*Presents a Major Foreign Policy Address by the*

HON. ADLAI E. STEVENSON

*Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations*

*Program*

Musical Introduction . . . . .	The Treble Clef Society
Welcome to Ambassador Stevenson . . . . .	Honorable George Christopher <i>Mayor, City of San Francisco</i>
Official Proclamation of U.N. Day . . . . .	George Killion <i>Chairman, United Nations Day State of California</i>
Report to Ambassador Stevenson . . . . .	Mrs. Adolph Shirpser <i>General Chairman, United Nations Day, San Francisco AAUN</i>
Presentation of Honorary Membership Scroll to Ambassador Stevenson . . . . .	Urban G. Whitaker, Jr. <i>President, San Francisco AAUN</i>
Introduction of Ambassador Stevenson . . . . .	Honorable Edmund G. Brown <i>Governor, State of California</i>
UNITED NATIONS DAY ADDRESS . . . . .	Honorable ADLAI E. STEVENSON
Musical Tribute to Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld . . . . .	Treble Clef Society

*(For security reasons the audience will remain seated at the close of the program until  
Ambassador Stevenson has left the hall)*





Shirpser: I undertook the whole thing. I loaned my own funds as deposit on the Masonic Auditorium, where the big event was held. I arranged for a secretary, Mary Louise Allen, who had been former president of the Young Democrats. Because she was very devoted, she worked for \$250 a month and I think she often worked ten hours a day. I had her for two months before the actual event. We paid a small sum for professional publicity, because no one in the organization had any skill in that line. We thought we ought to get things done professionally when a man of Adlai's importance was our speaker.

I worked with the student body presidents of both U.C. and Stanford. We had dollar tickets in the balcony. They took big blocks, hundreds of tickets. It was nice to see all the young people there, and Adlai told me that he liked that arrangement.

I was determined that it wasn't going to be just the wealthy people there. Obviously, the sponsors had the best reserved seats.

I have a chart of the seats in that huge Masonic Auditorium here. It was truly difficult to allocate those seats among the VIP's. You make so many enemies in the process. At the last minute, somebody will turn up who must have a good seat and they haven't let you know until the last day. If you tell them there is nothing left but the back row, you might as well jump-off-the-bridge because, in effect, they will never speak to you again, unless they get good seats.

I never would try to sell reserved seats again for any event in which I participate. I spent three months of daily work on these events, most of the time in the San Francisco office of the AAUN, on Van Ness Avenue. It is very convenient for parking. Here's a chart of the auditorium. This shows our problem with sponsors' seats, and \$10 tickets; \$2.50 tickets. The \$1 balcony seats were not reserved. Oh, it was so difficult to arrange.

But somehow, you survive, and you do the best you can. Some people can't come at the last minute, so you do get a few extra seats.

I notice here that we had a United Nations Day Committee Meeting and Tea at the home of the Australian consul general a couple of weeks before the AAUN Day. We had pictures taken there. All this makes for good publicity.



Shirpser: I gave Herb Caen a humorous item and he used it, saying "these must be good times because there are some dollar seats left. The ten dollar seats have gone." You had to keep coming up with new ideas to get publicity.

But I worked under difficult conditions here, because shortly after becoming president of the AAUN, Professor Urban Whitaker accepted a position with the Carnegie Endowment for Peace in New York, with the United Nations. He was working on a China policy plan. This meant that not only did I get no help from the president of the organization, but I had to keep sending voluminous reports to him, too; three and four-page letters going back and forth. It was an added burden to me.

In another way, there was no interference, either--which was good. When I actually was able to produce Adlai, the board of the AAUN got in line, and wasn't dubious about anything else I suggested.

I did end with about eighty sponsors (all of whom I phoned) at \$100 each. So that was \$8000 to start with. We made a small profit on the \$10 tickets, and we gave them a champagne reception afterwards at the Fairmont Hotel. You had to give some incentives in order to sell the more expensive tickets.

I had appointed a very strong and helpful committee. When you examine the list of sponsors and the list of officials who participated, you will note this. Of course on the honorary committee I invited Governor Pat Brown, Lieutenant Governor Glenn Anderson, Secretary of State Frank Jordan, State Comptroller Alan Cranston, State Treasurer Bert Betts, and Attorney General Stanley Mosk. George Christopher was mayor of San Francisco then. He kindly lent me a car and driver for Adlai, to go all over town to various functions.

Lucretia Grady was chairman of the Mayor's Committee for the UN week, so of course she was on our executive committee. So was Congressman Jack Shelley (he went on to be mayor of San Francisco later), and Congressman Maillard.

I'll show you Adlai's schedule. After I had sent the whole schedule to Adlai, I got a wire from Clayton Fritchey: "Your long letter and schedule is mislaid. Kindly wire us another one." He was such an efficient and capable person, that I was amazed.



Shirpsen: Incidentally, I found a letter here from Martha Ragland. It was interesting because she and I were the two people, I think, who worked hardest for Estes and were so close to him. She was national committeewoman for Tennessee. I had written her about my commitment with Adlai for the United Nations Day. She tells me that she was, too, a board member of the Nashville AAUN and that she was doing a statewide job in starting new chapters. She says, "How interesting that our lives seem to run in parallel paths." She also says, "The last few years I've been less busy than ever in my adult life." This was so similar to my own pattern: when you've done something important at the national level and you've participated in national policy decisions, your life afterwards seems rather like "marking time." "I've done a good deal of traveling," etc., she wrote. This closely paralleled my own experience.

#### A Busy, Dramatic, and Successful Day

Shirpsen: I think I remember Adlai's schedule quite well. We had a big press conference at the airport, when he arrived at 11:25 a.m. It was a good conference and well attended. Then we left the airport around 12:30 p.m. and got to the Fairmont Hotel in time for lunch. We left him alone for lunch so he could eat it in peace, get unpacked, and get a little rest. George Killion did a very nice thing. He offered me his secretary to help Adlai. That was great. She was there to take the messages, answer the telephone in his suite, and she would type letters for him. When someone like Adlai comes to you, you need to "man" about three telephones.

We had the car and driver from the mayor, and we called for Adlai at the Fairmont in the afternoon and took him to Madeline Russell's home, where he had a private visit with her. Then the cocktail party was from four to five-thirty. The board members who did not spend \$100, naturally wanted to meet Adlai, too, so Captain McCauley decided to have a party at his home, and I was delighted to cooperate. So we had all the board members and their wives there. It was hard on Adlai to do that much, but we explained. He was good at accepting things that were inevitable, and he understood my problems.

Chall: What a strenuous day for him!



Shirpser: Then he went to his private dinner engagement. Then is when the whole thing "fell apart" for me. You know I had worked awfully hard on this.

When Urban came back to San Francisco, probably two weeks before the meeting he said, "Oh, I'll take responsibility now and relieve you." I said, "Please don't change any arrangements. It has been thought out carefully. It has been set up carefully. Everything is under control. Please do not change anything without consulting with me. Because I have had the whole responsibility up till now. You don't know any of the previous problems except in a general way. I want your word that you will not change any arrangements without consulting with me." He agreed to this.

He said, "You've done so much that I want to honor you, and I think this is what we ought to do. You have the car and driver. You and Adlai will go together from our dinner at Mrs. Russell's and wait in the little room off the lobby near the entrance of the Masonic Auditorium. After everyone is seated you will walk down the aisle with him and mount the platform with him."

I said, "I'd rather meet with the others in the waiting room at the back of the building and all go on to the stage together." He said, "I want to do this, Clara. You deserve it," and on and on. "That's the way we'll do it," and so I agreed, though reluctantly. I knew that his motive was good.

While we were having dinner (Urban and his wife were at Madeline's too) but not Adlai, who decided to have dinner with other friends of his. Ad said he would drive Madeline, and Urban and his wife to the Masonic Auditorium, and I had the car and driver to go call for Adlai at his friend's home, where he was having dinner. Just as they were leaving the phone rang and Urban answered it. Then he told me: "That was John Fell Stevenson and he wants to drive his father to the Masonic Auditorium, and you're not to call for him."

I said, "Urban, at the most important time in this whole thing, you've changed my arrangements, which you promised me you would not do without checking with me. I'll never find Adlai in that mob. We'll lose each other. John Fell doesn't know where Adlai is supposed to go. Did you tell him where he was supposed to go to meet me?"





Shirpser: He said, "Well, I thought he knew."

I said, "My God, Urban, call him back immediately." He called him, and they had already left. I was in despair. You can imagine the mobs that were going to the Masonic Auditorium. I said, "I'm coming to the back room and mount the platform with him and with all of the platform group." "No," he said, "you said on your arrangement sheet that he was to meet you in the room off the main lobby and you wait there for him." So, I went with the driver of the mayor's car, and I waited and waited and waited in that room off the lobby, and Adlai didn't come. So I went out and found the police escort that we had with us all the time, and I said, "Adlai hasn't arrived, and I'm getting desperate." I think the meeting was about to start at that time. Well, I was supposed to meet Adlai at 8:10 and it was past 8:25. The meeting was to start at 8:30. We looked down the street and cars were four abreast, filling California Street as far as you could see.

So the police on motorcycles took off trying to find Adlai in that stream of cars. I didn't know what kind of a car John Fell Stevenson was driving, but I said, "You've got to find him. The TV coverage is going to go on in a few minutes, and where's Adlai?" I was absolutely desperate.

The mayor's limousine and driver went out to try to find Adlai, as well as the police escort. I was standing there on the steps to the Auditorium, literally "wringing my hands." Everybody was coming in and congratulating me on what a great success this was. I could hardly talk to anyone, I was so upset.

The crowds got thinner and thinner as they were seated, and it got later and later. I was standing there out in the cold, and the wind, perspiring from exhaustion and agony. This was the heart of the whole thing. I heard applause inside. I thought, "I wonder what is going on. I guess they all went to the platform, except Adlai, because Adlai isn't here."

I stood out there. Latecomers kept saying, "Clara, it has started inside. You'd better go in." I said, "No, I have to wait here for Adlai."

All of a sudden, a young man walked up. I had never seen him before. He said, "Is your name Clara Shirpser?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Urban Whitaker wants to know why you don't



Shirpsen: come on the platform with the rest of them?" I said, "Because I'm waiting here for Adlai Stevenson." He said, "No, he's on the platform."

It was then about a quarter to nine. The meeting had been going on for about fifteen minutes, while I was standing out front. I decided that I was going to go home! I made up my mind, "I'm not going to go through that crowd all by myself down the center aisle, and climb the steps to the platform, all alone. Whoever is talking, I'll be interrupting them. Everyone will be wondering, 'What is wrong with me?' I'm not going to do it."

Then I thought, "I can't let Adlai down. I've got to welcome him publicly. Probably they have gone by my part of the program by now. I had asked Governor Brown to introduce him. My job was to welcome Adlai. And here, I'm outside freezing cold, shivering." In desperation, I walked down the wide center aisle all by myself, and there was whispering all down my path as I went. I got on the platform. There was an empty seat for me next Adlai.

He leaned over and said, "Where have you been?" I said, "If I said anything to you now" (and I spoke between clenched teeth), "I would say too much, so you'd better wait till this meeting is over, and I've calmed down." I was beside myself with frustration and anger. I had spent three solid months of preparation. Everything was fool-proof. I had gone over and over all the arrangements and plans, and at the last minute Urban did this to me!

Right after I finally arrived alone on the platform, I was called on to welcome Adlai. Fortunately, I had my notes clutched in my hands all during the waiting-for-Adlai-period. I was shedding my coat and scarf as I walked down the aisle. I walked by Ad, who was seated on the aisle, I said, "Why the hell didn't you come out and get me?" I practically threw my coat at him. I was wearing a fur coat, fortunately, or I think I would have caught pneumonia. I did get the flu afterwards. Later, many friends told me that they thought that I had something to do, that I was some place doing something for the arrangements. I thought somebody from my own family could have and should have come out to get me. They knew where I was, but nobody did.

Anyway, I got up to speak from the podium. I started to speak, and then everybody started to laugh. I thought, "What have I done now? Is something showing? Is my slip falling down?"



Shirpser: What is happening?" I stopped speaking, in bewilderment, and Adlai walked up to me, and smiled sweetly, and handed me my long black gloves which he had picked up. I had dropped them off my lap as I got up to speak. They tell me one glove was in one place on the floor and one was in another place. Nobody else got up, but Adlai did; he picked up my gloves, smiled at me, and handed them to me while I was standing at the podium, beginning my speech.

At that point I thought, "Well, you know, this really is funny." So I started laughing, too, and relaxed. Everybody was laughing. This was such an unexpected incident. This was a serious meeting where Adlai was going to deliver a major speech on foreign policy. I was the chairman of the whole AAUN events. I got up. I dropped my gloves. Adlai picks them up. He hands them to me. I relaxed, thanked Adlai warmly, saying something like "Always the perfect gentleman, my friend--" Pat Brown later wrote to me, praising my tact and poise in such trying circumstances. He didn't know how I felt during those "trying circumstances."

Fortunately, I had rehearsed my speech enough, so I didn't have to worry too much about it. It went well, I was told by many. Then I almost fell off the podium getting off. If somebody hadn't grabbed me I might have gone over backwards. You just can't believe how demoralized I was. The only thing that kept me going was that the meeting was truly a success. Adlai did make a great speech; and it was tremendously well received.

Then, Urban Whitaker asked the audience not to leave--that I was to escort Adlai Stevenson out of the Masonic Auditorium, and so we did walk down the aisle together at last--leaving the meeting. I have a very nice picture of the two of us going down the aisle together. On the way to the Fairmont Hotel I explained to Adlai what had happened. Then he told me that while they were waiting in the room to gather together, before going on the stage, Urban asked him to go around the vast Auditorium and to find me. A friend found Adlai Stevenson walking around asking, "Where's Clara Shirpser? Where's Clara Shirpser?"

Imagine sending Adlai Stevenson to find me! Urban knew exactly where I was, at the place off the lobby he had asked me to wait. So, of course, the friend who saw Adlai looking for me took him back to the room where the platform guests were. I don't think I ever forgave Urban Whitaker for what he did to me



Shirpser: that night, when he broke his promise not to change my carefully planned arrangements.

I just thought of something else that happened. We went over to the Fairmont Hotel. Only people with \$10 tickets were supposed to come, but many others jammed in, too. The line of guests was way out on the sidewalk and around the corner, people coming to see Adlai as word got around. It really wasn't fair to have him in line so long at the end of such a strenuous, long day. There was practically no opportunity for him to rest except during that lunch hour. Person after person came by, and they all wanted to stop and talk, and I practically had to take a hook and drag them away. I kept introducing them and sending them on their way.

Finally, Adlai turned to me and said, "Do you realize that every man and woman who has come by here has said what everybody else all over the country has said? Since I lost in 1956, I have never met a man or woman who didn't vote for me or support me. How the hell did I lose, Clara?"

In the midst of all this, when he was so tired, he could still think of something clever and funny to say.

Adlai was delighted that we had had such a successful day. We had started with a \$2500 deficit and I produced \$10,000 net for the organization. I was very proud of that, and Adlai was happy and praised me warmly. There were many expenses: electricians, the rental of the auditorium, printing, postage, ushers (the union insisted on this), some secretarial work. I commuted every day for three months, and it was quite an expense for me. I had to eat lunch out every day; we often had dinner out, too, because I was too tired to cook. But it was such a triumphant event. I think KPIX had Adlai for an interview, as they usually did when he was here.

I had so many wonderful letters from people who participated and who attended, as well as from my committee members, and sponsors, with praise of what I had done. Adlai wrote me a letter full of approbation, and said, "it had been a joy to be with you as always." He didn't say things like that too often! So I treasured that letter.

I have his speech. I have my speech. There's a lot of information here and the breakdown of receipts and expenses.





Shirpser: Of course, the success was all because of Adlai. He was great, and people loved him. Around San Francisco, I think there was no one more popular. That was the sixteenth birthday celebration of the United Nations.

Chairman of East Bay Hospitality, UN Day, 1965

Shirpser: Ad and I went to the later celebration, which was the twentieth UN birthday, in 1965. By then, Jack Shelley had become mayor of San Francisco. I think I was one of the very few from outside of San Francisco whom he invited to join the official citizens' committee for the UN celebration in San Francisco. It was called The Twentieth Anniversary Commemorative Meeting of the United Nations. Actual United Nations sessions would take place in San Francisco.

Chall: Is that the time they brought them out here?

Shirpser: Yes, that was in 1965. I was very glad to serve on that committee. Mortimer Fleishhacker was the chairman.

Chall: His co-chairman was Bob Gross.

Shirpser: I will mention something here that disturbed me a little. When I was chairman of the UN Day in 1961 and I asked people to be sponsors for Adlai Stevenson, most of them were delighted to accept. They were so glad Adlai was coming. They were happy and honored to be sponsors.

When I called Mortimer Fleishhacker he said, "No, I don't care to do it." I knew he was an active Republican, so I said, "Mr. Fleishhacker, perhaps you don't realize that Adlai Stevenson is coming here as our Ambassador to the United Nations. I have many Republican sponsors." I mentioned we had Ed Osgood, who was chairman of the San Francisco Republican Central Committee and many other Republican sponsors. "It is completely bi-partisan; I'm anxious to have your name, and because you are president of the World Affairs Council." I spoke of someone else who was an official of the World Affairs Council who had accepted as a sponsor, and said that I was sure that he, as president, would want to be one of the sponsors for Adlai Stevenson.



Shirpser: Mr. Fleishhacker said something to this effect: "Perhaps you did not understand me. I do not care to be a sponsor of Adlai Stevenson's visit to San Francisco." I said, "Thank you very much," and hung up.

Mayor Shelley didn't know any of the background of this. You didn't talk about things like this when you had the responsibility of being the chairman. But when I found that Mr. Fleishhacker was the chairman of the Twentieth Birthday celebration, and he had Adlai Stevenson to his home for dinner as the guest of honor, I could not help being annoyed.

Mr. Fleishhacker, as chairman of our citizens' committee, asked me to be chairman for hospitality dinners in the East Bay, and said he would like to have twelve representative homes to which to bring United Nations delegates. The hospitality dinners were to be in San Francisco, and in the East Bay, and down the Peninsula.

Chall: They were to stay at people's homes?

Shirpser: No, just for hospitality dinners. I went through lists of friends, and prominent people; I worked hard to have a good cross section in the East Bay. I had enthusiastic acceptance from everyone including the vice chancellor at U.C. (Clark Kerr, president of U.C., was out of town.) I'm proud to say that not one person I asked to be a host and hostess asked me what race the delegates were going to be. Because I heard that down the Peninsula some hosts said they did not want any delegates who were not Caucasians.

If anyone had said that to me, I would have said, "Then, you should not be a host to delegates from the United Nations." Evidently I asked worthwhile people because none of them brought this up. Ad and I did go to the chancellor's cocktail party as well as to a couple of dinners.

Here's an interesting sidelight. We had one of the Russian delegates at the chancellor's home for cocktails and dinner. They lived very informally and they had three darling children, aged about eight to twelve years. The children served the hors d'oeuvres. I was standing next to the Russian delegate, helping to receive people as they came in. He turned to me and said, "I thought you had very strong child labor laws in this country. I didn't know that children worked." I said, "They aren't working."



Shirpser: They are helping their parents to receive guests, and to see that the guests get adequate food, and they love doing this. They're meeting people." He said, "This wouldn't happen in Russia." So I called one of the children over and said, "Would you please tell Mr. so-and-so how you came to be passing food to the guests?" He said, "Oh, I'm having a wonderful time. I'm meeting all these fine people." He started chatting with the Russian delegate in his friendly, open, frank manner.

The delegate asked him, "Do you like to serve people?" The child said, "This is what I always do when my parents have a party." The Russian delegate turned to me and said, "You know, I'm glad I saw this. I didn't know this. When I go home I'm going to ask my children to help me next time I have a party."

So you see, you got these benefits by the home hospitality program. In almost every case, the delegates asked to see the kitchen. They wanted to see the new and modern appliances. They were amazed at how many hostesses did their own cooking. They didn't realize this would happen in the United States, and they often asked very personal questions. I think it served an excellent purpose, to bring these people who had probably never been to an American home before, at least in the informal style of California living, to see how we actually lived. They looked at our stoves, dishwashers, and refrigerators and talked to us about problems of housekeeping, trying out a dishwasher and seeing the garbage disposal at work. They seemed to enjoy doing all these things.

Ad and I went to about four different parties, so I got to see and talk to a lot of delegates in that way. I was asked to go to all of the parties in the East Bay, but I only survived about four of them

Chall: How were the parties arranged?

Shirpser: I did it.

Chall: How many people usually came to one home?

Shirpser: We usually had four delegates. I think at the chancellor's home we may have had about six, because it was a big home.

Chall: These were all members of the delegations, plus the hosts. So it was perhaps ten people?



Shirpser: No, the host could have as large a party as he wanted and most of the parties were twelve to twenty-five guests. It was completely up to them. That was their party and they could handle it as they wanted.

Then, after I had it all arranged Mrs. Fleishhacker called me and she said, "Mr. Fleishhacker has decided that there will be only eight dinner parties for delegates in the East Bay." I said, "What would you suggest I do with the other four?" "Well, you choose the ones to omit which you feel would be least congenial." I said, "I will do no such thing. I will resign. I have gone to a lot of trouble and effort and made the best possible selections, and there will either be twelve dinners here, or I will resign. I will call Mayor Shelley immediately, and tell him why."

She said, "Well, I'll have to speak to Mr. Fleishhacker." I said, "I think you'd better." So he called me that evening. He said, "I didn't realize you had already done all this." I said, "You asked me to do this, didn't you? A week has elapsed. How long did you think it would take me to get twelve people to have home parties? In fact," I said, "the only one I will cancel is my own." I had intended to have a group in my home. "I will cancel mine and go visit some of the others as I have been asked to do in every case. So you will have eleven hospitality dinners in the East Bay. But I will not budge from that eleven. Why don't you choose the ones you want to cancel and tell them yourself as to why?"

He said, "I couldn't do that." I said, "Neither will I." So he said, "Well, I guess you'll have eleven hospitality dinners then." I said, "I guess I will, or I will resign from the committee."

He was evidently accustomed to having people follow his dictates. I thought it was outrageous to ask me to arrange twelve dinners, and then try to cancel one third of them. So I did not cancel any but my own. The hosts and hostesses wrote or phoned and thanked me, and said it had been a wonderful experience, and they enjoyed their delegates. Some delegates came in native costumes (usually the African, and some Asians did, too). Everyone had a lovely time. It really worked out beautifully with the ones I attended, and I'm sure the rest were equally good.





Shirpser: Then, when we went on with our arrangements for the UN session, members of the citizens' committee--I had one more problem with Mr. Fleishhacker. After news of the UN event was released, I was called by the University of California. I think it was Professor Edward Strong, who was head of the U.C. Extension. He said that they had not been able to get tickets for the Opera House where the UN sessions were to be held. This was something I heard about twenty times a day every day. People called me for tickets, and no tickets were available. I think as member of the citizens' committee I got either two or four, perhaps two downstairs and two upstairs. With all the people that I had asked to help me, all those hosts and hostesses, I thought that they should have been given tickets, as well as many of the sponsors of three years before. They all turned to me for tickets and I had to tell them, "Call Mr. Fleishhacker. He's taking care of the tickets personally. I don't think anyone on the citizens' committee has gotten more than four tickets. I can't even ask my family. My daughter and her husband can't come. I don't have tickets." I would have loved to have had my grandsons there. They were old enough to appreciate hearing the UN sessions. They had been there three years before, when I was chairman for UN Day, and remembered very clearly what had transpired.

#### Adlai Stevenson: Friend and Disillusioned Ambassador

Shirpser: That was one of the problems. Dr. Strong said, "Here's the situation. Adlai Stevenson is here and everyone at the University of California wants to hear him. We can't get into the UN sessions at the Opera House. Will you work with us to have a large convocation at the University of California? We'll have it in the Greek Theater and the president of the University will be there. It will be official. We'll award degrees that day, if you like, so it becomes an official program. Will you work with us and be on our executive committee?"

I said that I'd be delighted, but I would have to get the permission of Mortimer Fleishhacker as chairman, of course. So I brought it up at the next meeting of our citizens' committee the problem of not having seats for people who should be there, who had been prominent in helping the UN, supporting it through the years. So, if we had the Greek Theater, those people from all over the Bay Area who have not been able to get in to



Shirpser: the Opera House to hear Adlai, could come to the University of California's convocation, where Adlai would speak.

Mr. Fleishhacker said immediately, without discussion, "Adlai Stevenson will not leave San Francisco. He will stay right in San Francisco. I have refused all other invitations." We didn't even have a committee vote on it. He went on to another subject at once. No one was even able to discuss it at the committee meeting. I didn't like that; I'm not accustomed to that kind of committee procedure. So I came home and I phoned Adlai in New York; I explained the whole situation to him. I said, "Will you stay over an extra day and come to the University the following day? It will have the official sponsorship of the University of California, the president, the chancellor. Degrees will be awarded. Everyone is longing to hear you, Adlai, and so few can get in the Opera House. I can't get tickets for anyone."

Adlai said, "Surely, I will." I didn't tell Mortimer Fleishhacker about my role in this arrangement. When this came out in the newspapers, he never knew how it happened. I think he suspected me, but nobody ever told. Adlai didn't tell, as I requested. The official invitation went from the University, of course, and Adlai accepted it through the University. So, no one has ever known except the people on the U.C. executive committee on which I was listed as a member, how this happened.

The last time I ever saw Adlai was that day at U.C. I'm saddened when I remember this.

Now, I want to go back to some of the other things that happened in connection with UN celebration. The first event was on Thursday, June 24, 1965. The city of San Francisco and the citizens' committee had a reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. I was one of the hostesses. I was in the receiving line for a while, near Adlai. He did a wonderful thing, and it was so typical of him. We were standing there, and talking between shaking hands with guests, and he said, "Where is Ad?" I said, "He's waiting until the crowd thins out. There are so many people waiting now to shake hands with you." "No," he said, "where is he, right now?" I said, "He's over there in the corner of the room." You could see Ad over the heads of the crowd. He was over six feet tall. Adlai said, "Excuse me." He left the receiving line and walked over to Ad. Ad told me this, later. Adlai said, "Well, you won't come to see me, so I've come to say hello to you. How are you?" and he put out his hand. Ad was deeply touched that



Shirpser: Adlai would do such a sweet and friendly thing. It was really a beautiful gesture. Neither of us ever forgot it.

Then Adlai came back to the receiving line. I had watched him go over to Ad, and I told him that was such a heart-warming thing and I know how much it meant to Ad." He said, "Ad has given up so much to let you go on with your political career and he supported you in everything you have done. I just wanted to say hello to him so he would know that I appreciate his attitude." We both thought this was a beautiful gesture for Adlai to have made.

That was Friday.

The next morning there were sessions of the UN, which were held in the San Francisco Opera House, the welcome by the mayor of San Francisco, and statements by the secretary general, and several speeches. Then there was a luncheon where the consular corps were the hosts. Then, in the afternoon there was going to be a continuation of speeches. Some time before that afternoon session (I think it must have been at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, after the official ceremonies were over), I noticed that Adlai looked happy, and I knew he wasn't happy being ambassador to the UN.

In order to give you the background of this, when Ad and I were in New York (I think it was in '64, because I found some correspondence that reminds me of this), I wrote to Adlai that we were coming and he invited us to have lunch with him. He gave us a choice of either the official UN apartment or the UN dining room. The apartment, at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, I had heard was marvelous; it was said to be beautifully decorated. He had a housekeeper, of course.

Chall: He lived there?

Shirpser: Yes. I think in his letter he said something like, "It is often amusing to see the menagerie at feeding time" (in the UN dining room). I really think I was unselfish in making the decision where to have lunch, because I preferred to go to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel and have Adlai all to ourselves and to see that noted apartment. But I knew that his office was just across the street from the UN Building, and I thought it would be so much easier for him and less time-consuming if he didn't have to go all the way back to his hotel, and then come back to the UN. So I thought that, in fairness to him, we ought to go to the UN dining room for lunch with him.



Shirpsen: By so doing, we hardly had a chance to talk to him at all, because people kept interrupting us and wanting autographs. Crossing the street, we stopped traffic. People came running from all directions. Adlai stood in the middle of the street signing autographs. People kept coming to our table while we were having lunch. So I kept regretting that I hadn't decided to go to his apartment. It was nothing that Adlai could help, and it was heart-warming to see how much they still wanted him.

But while we were having lunch, when we did have a chance to talk, I said to him, "You've been doing such a marvelous job in the United Nations. Are you happy in what you are doing?" He said, "You know me better than to think I could be happy articulating foreign policy when I want to be making foreign policy." This really put it in a nutshell.

I said, "Don't you attend cabinet meetings?" He said, "Yes, if I happen to be in Washington when they are going on. But usually I am traveling for the United Nations. Or there is a serious session going on at the United Nations and I have to be here."

"So," he said, "I'm told what I'm supposed to say too much of the time. I don't like that, and I often don't agree with what I'm supposed to say. I'm not a bit happy here, Clara."

I said, "If only Jack Kennedy had asked you to be secretary of state as he told me he would, if he won the nomination, and if you did not oppose him at the convention."

Adlai said, "Well, this makes it unanimous. I haven't had one supporter around the United States who was a delegate to the convention and who talked to Jack Kennedy, to whom Jack didn't make that same pledge: that I would be at the top of his list for the secretary of state. He didn't make a definite commitment, but he did say that I would be on that list. Later, I learned there were ten people on that list, and I was not on the list. I wasn't even considered as secretary of state."

I said, "Why do you think this happened?"

He said, "I think Jack wanted to be his own secretary of state, and he knew that I wouldn't be subservient. I would have cooperated, but if I thought what he planned was wrong, I would certainly have told him what I thought, and he didn't want that from me."





Shirpsen: At the UN celebration in San Francisco, Adlai seemed exuberant and happy, and I said, "I'm so glad to see you in this mood. Now you like being ambassador to the UN."

He said, "Well, I'm especially happy because something is going to take place during this conference, which is going to give me the greatest feeling of satisfaction. Lyndon Johnson called me to Washington a couple of weeks ago, and told me he decided he would come to this UN meeting in San Francisco." (You see, he's not listed on the original program.) President Johnson made this a rather last minute decision. "He asked me what I thought could be done to break the impasse in the UN." That was at the time when the nations behind the Iron Curtain were refusing to pay their quota to the UN. They were being very difficult and the UN was in terrible financial straits. The United States had paid its commitment, but the Soviet Union refused.

So Adlai had a long talk with Lyndon Johnson and Lyndon said, "Tell me what you think," and Adlai did. He made the suggestion that the United States not only pay their own commitment but pay a large sum in addition to show good faith and belief in the work of the UN. Adlai suggested that President Johnson make a speech offering this generous overpayment of the UN dues of the United States at the San Francisco Conference and this would then serve as a sort of challenge--or reproach--to the Soviet Union for not doing their part. The Soviet Union delegates were attending this session where everybody was praising the United Nations, and its goals for peace, and they might be goaded into doing their part in making their financial contribution, as previously pledged.

Lyndon Johnson thought it was a great idea. He asked Adlai to write the speech. Adlai said to me, "I have never spent so much time and thought on a speech. You always tell me I make great speeches, Clara. This is the finest speech I ever wrote. Lyndon Johnson is going to give it tomorrow at the United Nations' main commemorative session."

I said, "Oh, I'm so glad, and I'm going to be there. My seat is right on the aisle where I can see him and hear everything." Adlai told me where he was sitting and I realized that I was only two or three rows behind him. The UN delegates, of course, had the center section and I was in the side section, but on the side where Adlai was seated, so I could see him.



Shirpser: When Lyndon Johnson was introduced and started speaking, I saw Adlai grip the arms of his chair and start to move restlessly. I thought, "I wonder if he's ill. I wonder what has happened." I was deeply concerned.

As Lyndon Johnson spoke, and made a very ordinary run-of-the-mill, vague speech, I realized that Adlai hadn't written that speech nor did it contain Adlai's ideas about breaking the impasse with the Soviet Union. Adlai's shoulders were writhing as if he were really suffering, and he couldn't sit still. I was very worried about him.

I couldn't get to him when the session was over. He was surrounded by so many people. But that night, at the UN dinner, I waited at the door of the Palace Court for him. There was a cocktail party preceding the dinner, just for the committee members, and some of the VIP's who were there. Adlai hadn't yet arrived. I hadn't been able to get through to him on the phone. I knew something terrible had happened, and I felt that I had to talk to him.

So as he came in with a group of people, and I said, "Adlai, may I talk to you?" So he stopped and told the others to go on. I said, "Adlai, what happened? That wasn't the speech that you composed." He said, in effect, "Clara, this is one of the low points of my life. Lyndon Johnson discarded my speech, the whole idea of it, and didn't even notify me. He threw away the ideas we discussed and planned, and he did not have the courtesy to let me know." Adlai said, "I sat in the audience and thought, Why am I doing this? How much more humiliation and punishment can I take?" Adlai poured his heart out to me in a way that I had never heard him speak before. Usually, he was rather reserved. This time the frustration was just pouring out of him, and the disillusionment, the disappointment. I was heartsick.

He said, "I can't go on like this, Clara. Now I have to go to London, because I have commitments there." Then he said, "When I return, I am finally going to resign as ambassador to the United Nations. I can't take any more."

I'm not sure of my timing, but I know it wasn't more than a week later that right outside of Ambassador David Bruce's embassy office in London, Adlai was walking with Marietta Tree, and he collapsed on the sidewalk, and died from a heart attack. It's such a heartbreaking thing to know that this great man who had served his country with such unselfishness and devotion,



Shirpser: who was so wise and so idealistic, and so eloquent, should have died a frustrated and embittered man.

I've always thought that the timing of his campaign was such a tragedy. No one could have beaten Ike. I think at any other point in history if Adlai had run, he would have won. He was one of the most magnificent men who ever has been in public life. He had such a deep sense of public service. How tragic that he ended his life with such disillusionment and disappointment, and perhaps it was literally "heartbreak."

I just couldn't get over it. I grieved. I still do whenever I think of him, which is often. I'm sure Adlai will go down in history as one of the greatest men who has ever lived in our country. In contrast to what is happening today, his stature is even greater--with his idealism, his high purpose, his integrity, in contrast to the Nixon administration. I keep thinking what a different world it would be, if Adlai Stevenson had been president. It's very hard to accept, and to rationalize.

We haven't talked about the convocation at the University of California, have we? It was very good. Students were sitting above the Greek Theater on the hills. Thousands and thousands of people attended. Adlai got one of the greatest receptions he had ever received in his life. People stood and clapped and clapped for ten or fifteen minutes when he was introduced. It was at a time when he was so unhappy after what Lyndon Johnson had done to him the day before. He must have felt that much of his life had been in vain. He couldn't have helped feeling this way from what he said to me.

Then he received such a tremendous reception at U.C., such acclaim from everyone. On the Greek Theater stage, Ad and I were sitting near Adlai, and he did look a little happier. He made a marvelous speech there, as always. As he was going out, I got to him through the crowd and he kissed me "goodbye." He didn't do that very often. I remember well the times that he did. I'm so glad he did that day, because that was just before he went to England, and it was the last time I ever saw him or talked with him. At least, I had a "happy" goodbye with him that day. He thanked me warmly, because he knew that I had helped to arrange this meeting.

Chall: It was a great send-off.



Shirpser: Yes, it was. I have such lovely letters here from the East Bay Committee for the United Nations Twentieth Anniversary, thanking me for my help right from the very beginning. "Your valiant efforts to get us time on the week's program for our Berkeley convocation; your other efforts to get guests for the hospitality program on this side of the bay, contributed most substantially to making the day for all of us a very happy one long to be remembered."

The chairman of the U.C. meeting also said, "We had the opportunity to meet Mr. Shirpser, and we're very glad that he also could participate in these exercises." This letter was from Judge Stanley Wood, Chairman; Robert P. Stone, Program Chairman; Paul Webb, Program Chairman. I was on their executive committee. I had many letters from people who were on the committee and they all thought it had been a great day. So did I.

I'm so glad in view of what happened so shortly afterwards that there was this happy ending to Adlai's visit to the Bay Area. It wasn't on the official United Nations' program, but it was a related event.

It was a great privilege to have Adlai's friendship, and to have him share with me many of his thoughts and to have his confidence. It was a really great opportunity, which I deeply valued.

#### Alcatraz Island Commission, 1965

Shirpser: I find that in '65, I was working on the Alcatraz Island Commission for the American Association for the United Nations in San Francisco. We conceived a plan to build on Alcatraz Island a great peace monument, with a statue, that would, in time, hopefully, have the same significance as the Statue of Liberty in the harbor of New York, welcoming people to our shores, especially from the Pacific Ocean countries.

What we wanted to do was to have the sculptors of the world compete, and to have an international committee of qualified people to choose the winning sculpture. We envisaged this as a mammoth statue with, perhaps, a great torch that would throw light into the sky. We wanted to tear down all the old dilapidated,





Shirpser: hideous reminders of what Alcatraz had been, and to have a park there where people could come, as they do to the Statue of Liberty.

I was on the UN committee which recommended this peace statue plan to the congressional committee. This is a letter from a dear friend, Jeffrey Cohelan, who was congressman from my district. It's dated February 19, 1965, and he tells me that he had introduced this legislation to carry out the recommendations of the Alcatraz Island Commission of which he was a member, to "build a monument on Alcatraz Island commemorating the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945, and as a great symbol of peace."

He knew I had been a member of the citizens' committee for the 1965 UN celebration, as well as the local Alcatraz Island Committee. So he sent me a copy of his bill. The UN committee asked Cyril Magnin to be the chairman of the finance committee. We knew then it would be well financed, and we were delighted that he accepted. Several of us spoke before the congressional committee when it came here for hearings. The committee favorably reported it. Then it was shelved, and we heard nothing more about it.

But recently, in an article in the newspaper, I saw that our plan is being revived. So maybe it will still come to fruition. I surely hope so, because it seems to me to be a great thing to do with Alcatraz Island. I believe it is owned by San Francisco now. I think at one time Congress approved the sale of Alcatraz Island to San Francisco.

#### Estes Kefauver: His Sudden Death, His Worthy Life

Shirpser: I was riding home, with Ad one day from San Francisco, about six o'clock. Jack Tolan was in our car, too, I remember. In those days, gasoline was scarce. This was in August, 1963.

Jack was a neighbor, and he used to go with Ad in the morning from Berkeley and come back with him at night, because they wanted to be together, and there was a problem with gas, and of parking in San Francisco. When I was in San Francisco, during the day, I would come home with Ad. Jack would come to the store to drive home with us. We always had "good talk," since we shared many interests.



Shirpser: I remember, right after we got off the bridge itself, and we were driving along the freeway, I wanted to hear news at six o'clock. We turned on the car radio and the first words I heard were, "Senator Estes Kefauver died of a heart attack today."

I almost went into shock, hearing this tragic news so suddenly. I had received a letter from Estes only the day before. He told me in this letter that he had pulled a tendon in his leg a couple of weeks ago, and he was wearing a heavy cast on it. He wrote, "You know these long marble corridors on which I walk back and forth about ten times a day. Dragging that thing is really exhausting." That's the only time he ever mentioned to me that he was tired. He seemed inexhaustible in his strength. I really could hardly bear this sudden news of his death. I didn't know any of the details. Ad had pulled to the side of the road, and he was trying to comfort me. We kept listening to the radio. More and more information came.

Later, friends in Washington, D.C. wrote me, knowing how close I was to Estes. They all blamed Bethesda Naval Hospital for letting Estes die. I was told that this is what happened: Estes was one of the great pioneers in consumer protection legislation. He had many meetings of his anti-monopoly committee along the lines of exposing drug abuses, credit abuses, etc. Congress was considering the communication satellite commission that had just been formed. This was being controlled by private industry. A bill had been introduced that would have been a "windfall" proposal to benefit private industry. As I remember it, the private companies that used what had been gained through research paid for by the taxpayers, were to pay an inadequate fee. In other words, our tax dollars were paying for all this research, for all this communication satellite set-up, which was being handled by private industry. But those actually using the benefits of the research should certainly reimburse sufficiently the Treasury for their practical use of the material. So Estes was making a speech in the Senate regarding this controversy, recommending adequate reimbursement by private industry. While he was making his speech, he suddenly became painfully ill, and he sat down. Of course, friends of his in the Senate rushed over to him, and wanted to get a doctor and an ambulance. "No," he said, "it's probably just indigestion. Give me a few minutes. Then I think I can resume."

So he did resume his speech, and he finished it. He had the strength to do this. I just don't know how any human being could take the punishment that Estes gave himself. This was a strong



Shirpser: speech, in promoting the public interest, which was always Estes' chief motivation.

Then, later that day, he became ill again. So then he did go to Bethesda Naval Hospital. In the beginning, the doctors diagnosed it as a mild heart attack. As more tests came in, they realized he had an aneurism, which, I was told, means a ballooning of the heart muscle. This is where I think the Naval Hospital doctors were culpable. (A young friend of mine, David Barton, recently died from exactly the same situation.)

Heart specialists usually rush a patient into surgery because there is a danger of the heart "bursting." Instead of immediate surgery, they decided to wait until the next morning to operate. They called Nancy and the children, who were at a guest ranch in Colorado. They, of course, flew home immediately, but did not arrive in Washington until about eight the following morning. But at 3:30 that morning Estes' heart "burst" and he died. I'm uncertain about the medical term.

Friends who knew about these circumstances blamed the naval doctors, and blamed the hospital itself that better care was not given to Estes. That a senator of Estes' stature, of his importance to the nation, should have been allowed to wait until morning for the essential operation, knowing what could happen to him in the meantime, was really unforgivable, I think. He was at the height of his influence and his capabilities, and he would have contributed so greatly to our country, if he had not died at that early age.

I was summing up my own thoughts about Estes, as I was jotting down some of these things. I became ill afterwards. I was so shocked and grieved. I immediately got a call from a mutual friend, asking me to come to Estes' funeral in Tennessee. I would be with the Kefauver family, as one of the people who was closest to him. I was too ill to go. I couldn't make it.

Later, I heard about the funeral from many people, especially Adlai. Of course many, many of his colleagues in the Senate, many governors, congressmen, as well as friends, came to his funeral. But the thing that impressed Adlai (as he wrote in his letter to me, knowing how sad I would be) and in the accounts I read that impressed other people, too, were the thousands and thousands of ordinary people who stood there in the cemetery. It was raining, and they stood there in the rain, bareheaded, all during the procession into the cemetery and during the eulogies,



Shirpser: with tears rolling down their faces.

Chall: This was in Nashville?

Shirpser: No, he was buried in Madisonville, which had been the family home, a small, rural community. A plantation and a family cemetery were there. His great-grandfather had built a small plantation house which was still preserved. Estes was buried in the family cemetery, and from all over Tennessee these people came, by the thousands. Adlai said it was one of the most moving things he ever saw, the way they stood there crying in the gentle rain, knowing that they had lost their dearest and best friend.

Estes had a rapport with people, more than anyone else I have ever known. When somebody asked me: "What was the key to his success as a politician?" (Because he was, obviously, a very successful politician.) I thought, and then I said, "Because the people trusted him." I think this was truly the basis. He cared about them. They knew that he did. He never was too busy to stop and shake hands and talk to people.

I remember, too, when we met in committee sessions, he would listen to everyone. He always had the time for that. Then he would say, "Thank you, I've listened to each of you. Now I'll make up my mind." That was so typical of the most important decisions he made.

Again, I think of this president (Nixon), who hasn't had a cabinet meeting in four months, but Estes wanted to know what people thought, at every level of life.

I've told you about tremendous offers of funds and of partnerships in law offices, which he refused even though he had to place a second mortgage on his home, because of his need for funds. I don't think he ever took questionable money. I've sat in the room when large sums were offered him. But there were "strings" attached to them, and sometimes they came from questionable sources and though he needed funds desperately, he always refused them. He really had the highest qualities. I know some of his faults, too. Like all human beings, he had his faults. But his strength, his courage, his integrity, and his high motivation, so out-weighed the human weaknesses, that I think he, too, will go down in history as one of our greatest men. More and more people are realizing his qualities as time goes on.







Estes Kefauver with Clara Shirpsen, campaigning in the presidential primary, April 1956. San Rafael, California.



Adlai Stevenson with Clara Shirpsen, September 26, 1960. San Francisco.



Shirpsen: Every time he ran for office the people he had fought-- the gambling interests, the oil-depletion-allowance people, the drug industry--they all poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into the campaign of the man who would run against him. Estes kept beating them without adequate campaign money, because of what he stood for. Even in Tennessee, a state that didn't support civil rights, he was for civil rights. They were so proud of him that he got a larger majority of votes every time he ran for reelection as senator, without making compromises on issues in which he believed. I think his loss to our country was a very great one.

I still miss him greatly. I think I was one of his closest, most intimate friends. Nancy, his wife, told me that, too. I think I haven't spoken of her and their family often enough. I didn't see them as often as Estes, but I felt very close to them. I feel that we shared almost a family feeling. I think Estes gave me his confidence to a greater degree than almost anyone else, far beyond what my capabilities were. I often felt that I shouldn't be asked questions which I really wasn't qualified to answer and given responsibilities beyond my ability. But he trusted me, and he knew that I was sincere. He knew I would tell him what I thought, right or wrong. And he knew that I didn't want anything for myself. There was no self-interest in my devotion to him. And so, I think that I did serve a purpose in his life, that he could "unload" to me, and tell me his problems. I really know so much of his intimate concerns.

Chall: Were these primarily political? If he was disturbed about anything personal in his life, would he talk these over with you too?

Shirpsen: He would talk these over with me, too, as well as political plans and problems. He would say sometimes, "Just in talking with you, I clarified my own thinking." In some things, he couldn't do that with his wife, Nancy, because she was not so interested in political life, nor in issues. She was more of a social person; she was an artist. She was attractive and charming. She loved parties, and to be with people that she enjoyed. But she didn't like to be with people she didn't like, even if they were helpful to Estes. She often resented the long, hard hours he worked. I shared Estes' triumphs and his defeats during the years 1952 until his death in 1963.



Shirpser: When Estes was away on a trip he always wrote to me. We were about the same age, and had gone through the same political "highs" and "lows." In '52 when I was elected Democratic National Committeewoman in the Kefauver delegation, I shared his political career from then, until his tragic, sudden death.

I've not spoken of what a tall man Estes was. You know, he was six feet four inches. I could always find him a crowd. All I had to do was to look up in the air and "there's my candidate." With that strength, there was such gentleness, too. It was an unusual combination--to be so considerate and thoughtful, yet so strong and virile, and he was a very masculine person, very attractive to women.

Victor Terrell, who was on the staff of Estes' anti-trust monopoly senate committee, spoke of Estes' "high political morality." I think this was a phrase that was very true of Estes. Because he did have that quality in great measure, that he couldn't be tempted. Mr. Terrell also spoke of the fact that sometimes Estes would stop and talk to people at length and form a friendship with them, with just ordinary, plain people. Mr. Terrell wrote of how many people had offered Estes money, which he refused; offered him entertainment which he refused; and they would have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to get in Estes' good graces and they couldn't do it. And a plain, ordinary person who would stop him on the street and say, "Senator, I would like to talk to you," would become his friend. Estes would send him a Christmas card, and he'd answer his letters. He had a remarkable combination of qualities.

I wish I could find what Adlai said about him at Estes' funeral, because Adlai always phrased everything so beautifully, and with deep meaning.

Afterwards, a Kefauver Memorial Library was set up, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. That's where Estes had lived, on a mountain above Chattanooga. I was on the national committee for the Kefauver Library. I raised funds among his California delegates and friends here, quite a substantial sum. Of course, I contributed, too. I sent some of my political papers to the Kefauver Library, regarding Estes' political career. The Kefauver Library has scholarships for many students who can't afford to go to college, and who are interested in politics. It has done quite a job in that field, too.

Chall: So it is endowed?





Shirpser: Yes. It had wide support around the country and I know that would have pleased Estes.

Chall: I should think every politician would need somebody in whom he could repose complete trust. I don't suppose they always get them, but this must be tremendously important to somebody in office.

Shirpser: I think the people around him realized that where I was concerned. Henriette O'Donahue, who was his chief personal secretary, and who was his close friend, and a dear friend of mine, too, told me that she thought Estes, in the close relationship that he had with me, often found relaxation and clarified his own thinking. She told me that Estes would return from a trip saying, "Clara said this," or "Clara said that," or "Clara thinks this or that." She wanted me to know this. Also there was a young man named Don, I can't think of his last name. He usually traveled with Estes, serving as secretary. He always told me that when Estes was around me, he was more relaxed and happier. Don said he knew that I was good for him. This gave me great pleasure and satisfaction.

Chall: Did this create any problems with your own husband? Was it the kind of relationship that would cause him uncertainties or doubts?

Shirpser: I don't think so, because Ad understood this close bond, and he was so devoted to Estes, too. Whenever Estes was in our area, we three were always together, except when I traveled with Estes, campaigning. Then Ad couldn't come. You'll see in Estes' letters that he always said, "My love to Ad." "I think of him often." "Something reminded me of such-and-such which we three did together." No, Ad understood. Frankly, I don't think many husbands would have, because Ad knew how deeply I cared for Estes. But he also understood why I did, and it didn't bother him. Ad was glad that this wonderful relationship did exist.

Of course, when Ad and I were in Washington, we were often with Nancy and Estes. No, this didn't make problems for me with Ad. Ad was very understanding, and he wanted me to be happy. Ad and I shared a good and full life together. He told me that my political career had enriched both of our lives.

Chall: It was a kind of unusual relationship.

Shirpser: Yes, it was.





The Political Campaigns in 1964

Shirpser: Should we go on to the 1964 campaign with Johnson and Humphrey?

I have found a picture taken with Hubert Humphrey. It's dated June, 1964. He was having cocktails with Ad and me at the Fairmont Hotel. He looks so young there, and so did we! He wrote on the picture, "With thanks for your hospitality, but above all appreciation for your effective leadership. Your friend, Hubert Humphrey."

Chall: You didn't go to the national convention?

Shirpser: The 1960 convention was the last one I ever went to. I was asked to go in 1964, but I refused. Three conventions in one lifetime, following each other, were more full of stress and exhaustion than I could continue to endure. The last one was a difficult one, in '60. I supported Adlai when Kennedy won the nomination.

When I went, as national committeewoman in 1952 and 1956, there was so many comforts--they made it easier for me. I was getting older, and in 1964, I couldn't stand in line by the hours for busses or taxis at all hours of the day and night. Another problem was no food, terrible food, and all the other things that went with it. I really had reached the point where I couldn't take it any more.

I was very active in Alan Cranston's campaign for U.S. Senator. Alan Cranston and Pierre Salinger ran against each other in the primaries in '64. That was a tough time, too. I was supporting Alan. I had a lovely letter here from him. I always made it a point when someone lost, to write to him. Few do that, as a rule, and I think that's when losing candidates need to hear from you, to tell them that they did a great job, that all wasn't lost, that they accomplished a tremendous amount in bringing the issues to the people.

I have a fine letter from Alan, telling me how much it meant to him, that I had done everything that was humanly possible, and how grateful he was, and he would never forget it.

I got a letter in July from Pat Brown telling me that he knew of my activities in the primaries supporting Alan Cranston,



Shirpsers: he was a fine person, would have made a great U.S. Senator. (Well, he is making a great senator now!) Then he said, "Pierre put on an excellent campaign. I am hopeful all Democrats will give him their full support now." And he tells me of Pierre's qualifications. Then, "I know we can count on your help in electing him as well as the entire Democratic ticket." Of course, I went on Pierre's committee. I was glad to do so.

Did I ever tell you how I first knew Pierre? He used to be a "man-of-all-work" in the Democratic State Central Committee office when Roger Kent was chairman.

Chall: I remember seeing his name on the list.

Shirpsers: If you needed someone to meet a VIP at the airport, it was always: "Ask Pierre." If you needed a speech in a hurry, you would say, "Pierre, would you write a speech for so-and-so?" Or even for me, sometimes, in an emergency. Anything we needed, we would turn to Pierre. I think he was called the "director" of the State Central Committee, but he was there available for anything needed. Then when he got to be U.S. Senator, this was such a big job for somebody whom I had thought of as one I could ask to do anything I needed, all through the years.

Chall: He had an important post with the Kennedys too.

Shirpsers: Yes, he was press secretary for President Jack Kennedy.

Chall: How did you feel about the fact that he was brought in, I think, by Unruh [Jesse] to give Unruh the power that he needed, or thought he needed?

Shirpsers: I always felt badly about it, because it hurt Alan Cranston, and I thought Alan deserved and would have gotten the Democratic nomination without this. I was working very hard on Alan's executive committee and I wanted badly to have him win. But after Pierre got the nomination, then the choice was very clear. I wanted to help Pierre get elected.

Chall: That's when Murphy won.

Shirpsers: Yes. I had very nice letters from Pierre, thanking me. "I could not have asked for more loyal help and support." He said that my letter, when he lost to Murphy, meant a great deal to him.



Shirpser: Again I wrote him on November 4, after the general election, as I previously did to Alan after the primary campaign. I think that you shouldn't forget the people who made a fine campaign although they lost. Because they lost, they are always stuck with big financial deficits, and I think it's cruel to forget about them.

Then I was asked to be Alameda County Chairman for Women in the Johnson-Humphrey general campaign.

Chall: When was this?

Shirpser: It was early October, 1964. One of the things I did was to organize the reception for Senator Eugene McCarthy at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley. I asked Lucretia Grady to be the hostess chairman. She got a lot of people to come over from San Francisco. Eugene made a very good speech.

During the campaign I succeeded in getting India Edwards out here for a luncheon meeting. At that time, I believe India was consultant to the United States Department of Labor for Youth Employment. Naturally, India was extremely well known here. Again, I got sponsors at \$25 each, and there were many who responded favorably. I think we made \$2000 on the luncheon. Of course, we got wide coverage and publicity, which is one of the things you have to keep working for in a campaign. It isn't just the meeting. It's all the publicity that goes out before, during and afterwards. India made some controversial statements which were highly publicized.

I had a very strong and representative committee. The luncheon itself was only a \$5 luncheon, so we had a big crowd, but the sponsors each contributed \$25. Pierre Salinger sent me a wire: "I regret I cannot be with you at the luncheon today honoring my old friend, India Edwards, who contributed greatly to the Johnson administration. Can't think of a group I would rather be with than you, except, of course, our Women for Salinger. Congratulations on the fine work you are doing for President Johnson."

Then I have a long letter from India. In this, she congratulated me on the job I did at the luncheon and told me some personal things. Then she says, "You did a superb job in organizing that luncheon and the only way I can account for the Democratic woman official's rudeness to us both is that she was jealous of your turning in that large check."



# **WOMEN FOR JOHNSON-HUMPHREY CAMPAIGN**

MRS. CLARA SHIRPSER, CHAIRMAN FOR ALAMEDA COUNTY

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Shirpser: Of course, this woman official sat at the head table, as my guest, and I asked her to make a short speech, and I was delighted that she could come. I don't know why, but she left in a huff. She did not speak to either one of us as she went out nor even said "goodbye." Neither one of us could figure out why.

Chall: Did she have a position in the Democratic party?

Shirpser: Yes, one of the top positions.

As I go through these things I keep coming across things that please me, because it shows that I was able to use my political "know how," and contacts, to do non-political things of value. I have several letters here from Dr. William C. Menninger. I met "Dr. Will" many years before, and of course I was enchanted with him. He had a magnificent personality. He was scintillating, dynamic, wonderful to be with. I met him through mutual friends. He asked me if I would get a group of friends together to whom he could speak, while he was in my area, fund raising for the Menninger Clinic in Kansas. Here was one of the greatest psychiatrists the world has ever produced (who then received \$100 an hour for consultations). And he, with his charming wife, were spending his time going around the country raising funds so his clinic could expand, with added clinics to help retarded children, fight alcoholism, and help with geriatric problems.

Whenever they came out here, I always saw them, and I did get several good meetings together for him, in terms of people who contributed then, and continued to contribute to the Menninger Foundation.

I contribute annually, too. Imagine him writing a personal letter, thanking me for a small contribution. But this letter mentioned that it was the twelfth year in which I continued to contribute. He wrote me: "You're always doing such good things for so many people."

So I was pleased that the contacts I made in politics could be used for such a good cause, and to help "Dr. Will." You know, he died of throat cancer a few years ago. His wife wrote me that he was so brave and fought so hard to continue his work as long as possible.



Shirpser:        In 1964, we had that dreadful Proposition 14 on the ballot that would have completely eradicated all the gains we had made for fair housing. I worked actively with the statewide committee to defeat it.



XVII A WOMAN IN POLITICS--RECAPITULATION  
(Interview 20, July 31, 1973)

Through Correspondence Saved, Activities are Reviewed

Shirpser: I came across some letters which I think are interesting and should be put in the record. One is from Nancy Kefauver, 1964. I had told her that Ad and I were planning to come to Washington and bring our two grandsons. So she says, "Please come and let us know in advance. How we would love to see both of you again. With love from all of us, Nancy."

That was in April, 1964. I had written her telling her how much I liked the Kefauver articles by Richard Harris which were published in The New Yorker first, and then in a book called The Other Voice. They delineated Estes' character and achievements better than almost any other that I had ever read.

Nancy says that she, too, thinks that those Richard Harris articles were well done and they managed to portray Estes as he really was. "I've had many letters about them. I'm glad you wrote The New Yorker. I plan to do so also." Then she tells me, "I've been adjusting as best I can since Estes is gone. I'm now working for the State Department as a consultant. My job is extremely interesting. However, I do find it difficult to combine that job, my studio and home duties. Somehow I do manage and all is quite well." That was in '64.

In '67 I kept a clipping, Tuesday, November 21, 1967, with a picture of Nancy. She collapsed at the Willard Hotel. She was at a dinner honoring Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois. President Johnson was there as a guest. As I was told by friends later, she was sitting at the table eating and drinking, having a good time, and all of a sudden she slid under the table and died immediately of a heart attack.



Chall: She was a fairly young woman, wasn't she?

Shirpser: Yes, she was in her late fifties or early sixties. That was very sad. Their children are scattered among other relatives. I haven't seen any of them for so long.

Chall: Were there four children?

Shirpser: Yes. They had one child, Linda, shortly after they were married, and then no more children. So they adopted David. Within ten or eleven months Nancy was pregnant with Diane. Another little girl, Gail, came a couple of years later.

Then I came across a letter, May 1967, from Micky Polan [Dr. Lincoln Polan] who was Estes' national treasurer. He and his lovely wife, Nancy, are close friends. They live in West Virginia. He's a physicist. He joined Lyndon Johnson's campaign in 1964. Nancy, his wife, is a well-known artist. They have often sent me his excellent sketches and small etchings. Micky asked about some political things, and then he wrote: "Clara, would you like to have a short-term mission in the Department of State or something similar?" So still in 1967, long after Estes was gone, Micky still remembered and he asked me. But the prevailing reasons why I couldn't accept were still there. It would not have been fair to Ad, for me to leave him and go to Washington, D.C., even for a "short-term" mission.

In going through my husband's papers since his death (which I make myself do at intervals), I found literally hundreds of letters which I had written him from Washington and while traveling in campaigns. Many of them are personal and I've destroyed them. But many of them detail what I was doing in Washington.

I don't know the date of this one, but I was telling Ad what I did during that visit to Washington, D.C. "Monday, I spent much of the day on the phone making dates with senators, congressmen, etc., who had asked me to call them when I was in Washington. I had a visit with Senator John Sparkman"--then chairman of the Senate Campaign Committee, I think--"at which I learned a lot about future plans for the Democratic party. He is very close to Adlai and Steve as you know. He was very frank and friendly with me. I had dinner with Ruth Moody." That was Senator Blair Moody's wife. "At least we started to have dinner together at the Statler Hotel, and a navy commander she knew from Michigan came to our table, and insisted on treating us both to dinner,





Shirpsen: and we had a good time. Senator Stuart Symington invited me for lunch today in the Senate Dining Room. He is certainly well liked. All through lunch, various senators, newspaper columnists, etc., came around. It was a most enjoyable lunch.

"Estes just arrived this morning. His aunt in Louisiana died and he went there for the funeral. So Estes came over and looked me up during lunch with Stu Symington, too. Also, I had an earlier appointment with Paul Butler and Katie Louchheim this morning at the National Committee office, and it was fun to say that I had to leave to keep a lunch date with Stuart Symington.

"From four to six o'clock Alice Hostetler is giving a tea for me." She was the president of the National Women's Democratic Club. "She also asked me for dinner, but I'm going to postpone that to later in the week, so I can join the Kefauvers for a cocktail party at the Shoreham Hotel, given by Jack Fry who is president of Aniline Dye Corporation. Then I'm going to the Kefauver's home for dinner. Nancy is having a lunch for me on Thursday in the Senate Dining Room with Katie Louchheim, Mrs. Paul Butler, and others. The Kefauvers are always so wonderful to me. Estes is leaving Thursday for some out-of-town speeches he has to make, so we will have to concentrate a lot of visiting together in this short time before he has to depart.

"Doris Fleeson"--you know who she is, the national columnist--"is having a cocktail party prior to the big annual Women's Press Club Dinner on Wednesday night, and she invited me to both cocktails and dinner. She had a marvelous table right in the center, in front of the head-table. I have never heard such caustic, clever introductions as those women reporters gave to U.S. senators. For instance, one of them said, 'Nevada's folly, Senator Molly!' Remember, Senator Malone of Nevada. "They gave scathing introductions. Estes was at the head table and was introduced. They said something nice about him. I wish I could remember exactly what. It was something about 'Estes Is The Bestest' with which I thoroughly agreed.

"Nixon was there and I remember when Senator Richard Neuberger, who was one of the speakers, said, without mentioning any names, 'One candidate came to my state'--Oregon--'and he dealt in character assassination and knife-in-the-back techniques.' And Senator Neuberger looked straight at Nixon whose face got red. There was no doubt in anyone's mind, because Senator Neuberger looked right over and intently at Nixon. Then he said, 'Another



Shirpser: Republican senator'--Nixon was a senator then--'came to my state, too. He was tough, but he was fair, and I have always honored Senator William Knowland for this.'"

There was frankness there. No punches were pulled.

Chall: Including the speakers, not just the women, but everybody?

Shirpser: Right. It was fascinating because everyone said what they really thought, at that dinner meeting. In one of the other letters I wrote to Ad, I noted that Doris had a big party in the suite of her hotel afterwards--and she invited me to that, too, so I met many VIPs. They were so friendly and cordial, and they were such interesting and dynamic people. I wrote to Ad: "This is where it's fun to be a national committeewoman. I wish I could live in Washington forever."

Then I wrote in another letter about Jim Smith, who was the national committeeman from Alabama. He and I rarely agreed on issues, but we liked each other. He was always so nice to me. Nanna Thomas (national committeewoman for Alabama), who had been for Estes, introduced us, and we became good friends. He was a very attractive and intelligent person. "Paul Butler told me that Jim Smith had called him, and suggested that I be put on the executive committee of the national committee, which would have been wonderful. I was not appointed, but I certainly appreciated Jim's suggesting it. Paul said there weren't any vacancies then, but he indicated if there was any way he could work it out, he would. (He did not.)

"There aren't enough hours in the day around here. I have a ticket for the opening session of the House of Representatives tomorrow, very scarce and hard to get. Also, Senator Clements (of Kentucky) gave me a ticket for Thursday when the president will deliver his state-of-the-union message in the joint session of Congress." And I repeated, "This is where it's fun to be a national committeewoman."

I think it must have been a much more than typical visit, because I was busy day and night.

Chall: Was there a national committee meeting?

Shirpser: Yes, that's why I was there.

Chall: Was it common to give the national committeewoman and the national



Chall: committeeman invitations to these cocktail parties, seats in the gallery, to some of the women's press club dinners, and things of this kind? Or were you special?

Shirpser: Well, without meaning to sound egotistical about it--for instance, I did not see any other National Committee members at Doris Fleeson's party at the National Women's Press Club Dinner, or at the cocktail party of which we spoke (given by Jack Fry). Senator and Mrs. Kefauver took me to that. I didn't see another national committeewoman there, although there must have been a hundred guests.

Chall: Even Martha Ragland?

Shirpser: No. I didn't see her there. She may not have come to that National Committee meeting. I tried never to miss the meetings. In the first place, it was a great experience. You learned so much and you made many good contacts. You could contact different senators there and say, "When are you coming to California? When can you come: I'll see that we work out a good schedule." You know, you could do a lot of "business" for your state there. Certainly, California is a big state, and probably you'd get more attention than if you were from a small state. And thirdly, I was active, speaking on issues, arranging schedules, and organizing. So when Washington VIPs came to my state, they knew me. And then when I came to Washington, so many friends gave me a warm welcome.

It was just great to have all these invitations, not just because you eat and drink and have a good time. In Washington, that's where things were happening and often at lunches, dinners, and cocktail parties. I think more legislation is passed at these so-called social events than on the floor of the U.S. Senate! Because people are discussing pending legislation or what recently happened, or what's going to happen, and if you're a national committeewoman they include you. I often thought: "I ought not to listen to this. It's confidential." But everyone would say, "Stay right here, Clara. We have no secrets from you."

So really, those were great days. They were marvelous. Rereading these letters has refreshed so many memories of things that I had forgotten. I don't know whether I should include them in the papers I'm giving to The Bancroft Library. Those that I kept dealt mostly with political activities.

Chall: I wish you would put them into your papers, then, because that's the only way others can get the details.



Shirpser: If anybody can read my scribbling, they have to be pretty good. This is from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and I was describing a campaign tour with Estes. I threw away at least a hundred letters, but I kept those that had some general political interest.

I hadn't known that Ad kept these letters. I was touched and sad when I found them. There was a huge pile of papers I had never looked at, in his cabinet. I pulled them out, and saw my handwriting. There were literally hundreds. Ad must have kept every letter I ever wrote to him. It took me about three evenings to read them, and then I felt I just couldn't stand any more.

Chall: So what did you do, just throw them out?

Shirpser: Yes, just threw them away.

Chall: You probably have some good examples here.

Shirpser: I think so. I think they're pretty typical of what I was doing, and where I went, and what campaigns were like. There's a letter dealing with my interview with Steven Mitchell which was "hot and heavy." I demanded that he apologize, and he did. I speak of it in this letter. This related to when Hy Raskin wrote, at Steven's direction, an insulting analysis of the way I funded my office.

The Democratic National Committee met once in New Orleans, Louisiana, and so, I described that meeting to Ad.

#### The Role of the National Committeewoman

Chall: I think you talked about that but it's always good to have it firsthand in a letter when it's really fresh.

Before we leave the work on the National Committee there are some questions that I thought we could cover which are related to women.

It has always seemed to me that in the last number of years the opportunities for women to be active in politics really came through the National Committees, because they were required to





Chall: have 50 percent women. Otherwise, the chances are that there would have been no women on that national committee, the fact that you were there gave you an opportunity to be in on the workings of both the party and, to some degree, the legislature. So, what did most of the women do on this committee? Were you rather average in the fact that you were active and you were outspoken, or were you unique because most of the women were silent, passive, and wore pretty hats?

Shirpser: The average national committeewoman, I think, was older than I. Estes brought a whole group of new women in with him: Martha Ragland from Tennessee, Myrtle McIntyre from New Hampshire, and others. The three of us met and planned our own strategies on issues. We were younger than most of them; we certainly were more active than most of them. We didn't have the influence and power that some of the older women did, especially those who could give large sums of money. But we went out of our way to be cooperative and friendly with some of the older women. We could learn a great deal from their long experience.

I spoke of Emma Guffey Miller, who was the daughter or sister of a former governor of Pennsylvania, and she was a wonderful woman. She was so bright and alert; though I think she must have been in her eighties toward the end of the time I knew her. I worked with her especially on the Equal Rights for Women amendment--of which she was the leading exponent.

Then there was Maggie O'Reardon (national committeewoman from Massachusetts), who told the funniest stories I ever heard. Everybody loved her. She was always the center of a big group, especially in the hotel bar, telling stories with an Irish dialect, as only she could tell them. Fortunately, she took a liking to me. I learned so much from her, too, about practical politics.

If you will cooperate and you ask their advice, occasionally the experienced older women members that you know will use their influence in your behalf. If they make a motion, some attention is paid to them.

Also, Nanna Thomas from Tennessee had been on the committee for many years. Naturally, they have more influence than the new ones who come on the committee. We "Kefauver members" were active and had new ideas. I said this before--when you're an amateur, you don't know you can't do something you think you should do. So when you see it needs doing, you try to do it.



Shirpser: Every once in a while you succeed in accomplishing your objective. People look at you in absolute amazement, because they wouldn't have even dreamed of trying--they knew they couldn't accomplish it. We didn't know we couldn't, so we tried. We pioneered, I think. I jotted down some things about being a woman in politics that maybe we ought to refer to here, or maybe we ought to summarize at the end.

Chall: It fits in well now.

Shirpser: Going through papers, I came across notes I had made on being a Democratic National Committeewoman. I think many people who are reading this interview unless they go through the cut-and-dried provisions in the Democratic Manual, really wouldn't know. I wrote this at the request of the California Young Democrats for their publication.

My definition is a little bit facetious. I wrote: "You should attend all meetings of the Democratic National Committee at your own expense (in Washington, D.C., usually). You try to see that the party donors give liberally for National Committee expenses and for national campaigns. You do more than your share in organizing each community for Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners. You take part in as many non-political gatherings as you can through civic, educational, and other organizations. You interpret Democratic platform and policy. You are the spokesman for the Democratic party in your state. You correct misstatements in the press when you can get their coverage to do so. You help leaders to establish headquarters, especially for women, so they can participate with political organization activities. You make recommendations for appointments for federal patronage to those who have worked longest and most effectively for the party and who have the necessary qualifications. You help increase the circulation for the Democratic Digest. (That was our national magazine.) You coordinate women's activities. You serve as liaison between the state and the national committee. At conventions, you allocate tickets, passes and badges."

(I can remember one convention in 1956 where I was not allowed to do so!)

"When a national speaker is wanted in your state, the National Committee member contacts the National Committee Speakers' Bureau. Then, of course, if you can't get whom you want through the National Committee Speakers' Bureau you either ask permission to go ahead on your own, or you sometimes actually go over their heads to the person who is wanted. This is not



Shirpser: a good thing to do, if you can help it! But sometimes it's the only way you can get the speaker who is wanted, especially if you do know him well. You are usually forgiven if you get the speaker and have a successful dinner and you can send some of the funds to the National Committee. In that case, much is forgiven.

"You help to develop good candidates, and support them with organization and raising funds, as well as with policy matters in formation, if that is wanted."

I also said that the National Committee exercises power and authority that have been delegated to it. In effect when the party is out of power, the Democratic National Committee becomes the governing body of the Democratic party. I assume this applies to the Republican party, equally.

"You are elected for four years and you take office following the close of the national convention, which ratifies your election as one of the last items of business. Much of your effort is supposed to go into the control and direction of the national campaign. But as I interpret the National Committee post, you can be just about whatever you want to be, or are qualified to be. You do hold the highest political office in the state in its political structure. Depending on how hard you are willing to work, you can either be a figurehead and just enjoy yourself, or you can try to carry out the responsibilities of your office which are manifold, if you will accept them. You have the opportunity to work harder for longer hours than almost anyone else.

"I think the gentlemen of the party would much prefer to have you wear attractive clothes, and sit at the head table, and occasionally introduce a visiting VIP. But the people who have counted in the National Committee have been the men and women members who have been willing to take stands on issues as well as to produce funds. Naturally, if you are a "do-er," you become controversial. You make some wonderful friends, but you also make some enemies. (I was most fortunate in the friends I made and kept as friends to this day.) If you stand in the way of something somebody else wants, and you are fighting for something you believe is right, they just wish the women members would keep quiet and go away."

I think that women have a much more difficult role in politics. The national committeeman usually expects to do the thinking and make decisions, and the national committeewoman is



Shirpser: supposed to believe that "men know best." If you are by-passed when decisions are made in "stag" meetings, you either have to fight for your rights, or just submit. I always chose to fight because I was elected to an equal position of responsibility and of privileges, with the male member in my state, and I was determined to do my job.

With my first colleague, John Anson Ford, I had a wonderful and cooperative relationship. When John resigned, and Paul Ziffren was elected as national committeeman, the reverse became true, with all the problems and difficulties. In the long run, I think that I accomplished good results for the Democratic party and our nation. Certainly, the hundreds of letters I received from all over California, and nationally, too, confirm this.

You achieve some memorable "highs" and you suffer more "lows." The contacts and friendships you make, especially at the national and state levels, the experiences you share so closely with some of the great men and women who are leaders of our nation, as you work for issues and causes in which you deeply believe, are truly rewarding.

When your candidate wins, and you have participated and helped in achieving that victory, there is real joy. Even when he or she loses, there is the knowledge that their campaigns educated and often elevated, as when Adlai and Estes "talked sense to the American people."

The opportunities for accomplishment were great, and I served as well as I knew how to do. For me, it was a time of personal growth and development, and brought me a truly memorable and happy experience, as well as deep satisfaction from some achievements in the public interest.

### Why Aren't There More Women in Politics?

Shirpser: One thing we haven't spoken of is my continuing effort to encourage women to enter politics. I had a typical speech which I didn't use verbatim, but it was the basis for many speeches I made. I'd like to refer now to that. I said then: "In the years since women entered political life in gaining the right to vote, they have not realized their great expectations. When women won the right to vote, political bosses shivered





Shirpser: in their boots. They feared a real, old-fashioned housecleaning. They feared that women would use their ballots effectively to accomplish all the reforms for which they had been crying for many years. But what happened? Women knew how to gain victory, but not how to use it. They mistook the ballot as an end in itself, instead of the means to the end which we want to accomplish. Here in our hands is the key to unlock the door so long closed to women. Why have we failed to turn that key? Women outnumber men in the United States by two million votes [1950s]. Whenever we unite for a common purpose, we can win."

If women voters would be loyal to women candidates, they couldn't help but elect them. I have tried to analyze in my own mind why they haven't been more loyal. I think one reason is that many women have a rather derogatory view of politics, maybe a very derogatory view of politics. I know I have experienced that in my own lifetime, that people said, "Why did you enter politics?"--as if it were a terrible thing for me to have done. It was in reality one of the most productive and satisfying experiences in my lifetime.

Also, I think women tend to be jealous of other women. If a woman is succeeding, some women can be quite petty, practising "backbiting" instead of being glad that someone is representing them well and effectively. After all, you only have to look at our California legislature and Congress and see how few women get elected. So it is obvious that women do not support other women. It's much harder to raise funds for women candidates.

This is another strange thing. I have statistics here that show that women own about 60 percent of the total wealth in the country, including property, stocks, and bonds. But women rarely are on boards of directors of large corporations. They're just beginning to break that barrier. Maybe Claire Giannini got there first on the Bank of America board, because of her wealth and the stock she owns in the Bank of America. I think that this is partly because women have been indifferent and apathetic, as well as the fact that men tend to be reluctant to recognize women's ability.

I have phoned women who are wealthy and who said that they adored Adlai Stevenson. They wanted to entertain for him, at big parties which would be expensive. They wanted to do everything in the world that is social, and enjoyable. But if you asked them for a contribution, perhaps they might send \$25, where as a man with that amount of wealth might have given \$2500. Women have



Shirpser: rarely included in their budget--and I think every person, both men and women should--a certain amount for political contributions. In a democracy, this is basic. Do you know anyone who does this? I know very few. I don't think I gave as much as I should have, until I actually got into politics. So few people seem to realize that the way to have good politics and good candidates, who are ethical, able, and honest, is to not force them to accept large sums from a few people during their campaigns, because then these large contributors think they have a right to demand favorable votes on legislation they want.

That's why I was writing in this vein, because women really have not realized the great expectations that our suffragist pioneers tried to provide for us.

I often said in speeches, "I believe politics is truly women's business. You can't just watch from the sidelines and criticize. You have to act and participate in politics, realizing that politics affects your life every day in what you do." And I gave illustrations:

"Politics is the one game where you are counted in. And you can't pass your hand without letting someone else play it for you. In other words, the hand is dealt to you and if you don't play it somebody else is going to step in and vote the way they want to, instead of the way you would like. The trouble is too many of us do that; we let someone else play our hand. And since they usually play it to their advantage, we often lose."

How I wish that the indifference and apathy that grip millions of our citizens could be overcome. I fear that this applies chiefly to women. Yet time after time in our history public opinion has proved its power to lead rather than follow our statesmen and public officials. And then I quoted, "Remember that bad politicians are elected by citizens who do not vote." I believe that this is true. Look at the last election [1972] at how many people stayed home and did not vote. Plutarch said, "Every day and everything you do is the time for politics."

"This is a typical day in the life of women. In the morning, you turn on your stove to cook breakfast. The gas and electricity is controlled by the Public Utilities Commission in both quantity and quality and the rates you pay. That commission is appointed by the officials you elect. So that is political. The water you heat for coffee or tea is politically controlled. Cheap, abundant water is absolutely vital to the development of any state.



Shirpser: Your elected representatives should work to see that it's available and priced fairly. The rest of the food you prepare for breakfast has been weighed, graded, measured, and tested for impurities, and often priced by government supervision. This is political, under the Food and Drug Act. The milk you give to your children is free from infectious diseases through constant testing by government agents, and the price is often regulated through politics."

You can go on indefinitely citing other examples. "When you send your children to school there is the transportation, the busses or the street cars that carry your children to school. Are they efficient, safe, and is there a reasonable charge? If you drive your children to school the streets and the roads are built and controlled by politics, as is the price of your gasoline. Regarding the school buildings themselves, are there adequate facilities? Are there qualified teachers? Are the salaries paid to the teachers and are the standards of education fair? Do you have fair and equitable police protection? Is the fire department efficient and effective? These are all regulated by politicians at the local, state, and national levels. If you own your home, the property taxes are decided by politics. The rent you pay is also controlled by politics."

I stressed the fact that, "We often say that we have a strong, abiding faith in democracy. But we have a suspicious, contemptuous attitude towards the representatives we elect to carry out the 'mechanics' of democracy. We can't afford to have that attitude. We have to work toward electing candidates we can depend on, whose qualifications we respect."

Then I said that "the scope of women's activities has broadened in this changing world, especially during the war when a great impetus was given to the employment of women. And they proved they could do whatever jobs needed to be done.

"Regarding statistics, women manage about 85 percent of the family budgets in the United States. They control 70 to 80 percent of family buying. They control about 60 percent of all the savings. Since we have accomplished so much in these economic fields, why aren't we, as women, taking our part in the administration and making of laws that control our lives? Why don't we carry out our responsibilities and privileges by participating in politics, and helping to shape policy in the direction we want to go?"



Shirpser: I was often asked about the "Women's Viewpoint," and I said I didn't know what the women's viewpoint is. "If you have ten women in the room, you may have ten different points of view. But women have a special concern for certain things: the security of their family, maintaining the kind of standards on which the family is based, and for a good educational system, for good health standards, medical facilities and services, at prices they can afford to pay; good housing for their families and for equitable economic standards.

"But above all, women have a pressing concern for peace in the world; and for equal opportunity for all our citizens. Because of all these concerns women hate and fear war because of the threat to their sons, and to their daughters, too. In this changing world, daughters serve in the armed forces, too."

It was many years ago that I wrote this. That was a speech to encourage women to participate in politics. Very often, they had never thought of politics as actually entering their lives in so many ways. They often hadn't thought of this before. They would say, "I didn't realize that politics was affecting my actions, my habits and my life, as much as it does. I'd better get in there and try to make it better." This was a good reaction, so I used that typical speech in one form or another many times. Naturally, I varied this speech when I spoke to groups of men and women, shifting the emphasis to the importance of all citizens to be informed on issues and to actively participate to support good candidates, and to work in their campaigns, and to help with raising funds in a democratic manner.

#### Getting Started and Moving Up

Chall: Of course you were trying to get women to participate in their parties. Suppose they did. What did they do when they got into local politics or state politics? Did they stuff envelopes and pour coffee?

Shirpser: Yes, they did.

Chall: What else?

Shirpser: I always advised them to enter into the campaign of the local candidate, because if your candidate won, and you had supported





Shirpser: him strongly--perhaps you had organized a series of coffee meetings in homes, or you had raised funds for him, or you got the candidate speaking engagements in different organizations to which you belonged, or you managed to get publicity for him--then, if your candidate won you are in a good spot to get an appointment, if you want it, or to work in his local office, or he might give you an appointment to the State Central Committee. You will have successfully participated in politics and have demonstrated that you can accomplish something positive. That whets your appetite to do more.

I think you must have a period of indoctrination where you have to be willing to do the dull tasks. They have to be done. But when a group of women are congenial and get together and address mailing pieces, and you give them a cup of coffee, and someone perhaps brings sherry, and somebody else brings some candy, and you sit there and talk about everything under the sun while you are addressing envelopes, this makes the task less dull.

We always tried to make it more enjoyable. The person who is handling the mailing can do a lot. Instead of sitting someone in a corner over there all alone, and somebody else over here where there is no one to talk to, and they get bored, you put ten women around a table, and someone says, "I did one hundred in the last hour," someone else will try to do as well, or even more. Or they will write little notes on the mailing piece if they recognize somebody's name. "Please help us," "We need your cooperation," etc., and sign their names. You can find all kinds of reasons to make the job more interesting, if you try.

Then there are the telephone committees and manning the voting booths. We always try to have sufficient poll watchers to check on who has voted, at given times. When you see people haven't voted, then you phone them or call on them. You offer voters transportation. You offer them baby sitters, so they can get out to vote. There are so many ways that women can be useful, and they will discover what they like to do. Some people prefer one kind of activity in which they don't have to do much thinking. Other people would like to be writing speeches. Some enjoy precinct work and direct contact with voters. You try to put them wherever their talents are most effective. You have to have a period of indoctrination, because if you are an amateur, you have to learn your way around, and who will help you, and who you can help.



- Shirpser: I think the best way I know is to go into a political campaign, especially at the local level, because there you are participating actively in something that is going on, and you have the opportunity of knowing your candidate.
- Chall: The women you met on both the state and the national levels, how did they get beyond that first stage to where they were on the national committees or state committees?
- Shirpser: If I want to be cynical, I would say they gave large contributions; secondly, that they established a long record of service to their party.
- Chall: Many of us have gone through exactly the route that you are talking about and stay right there. It's quite satisfying and may be to many women. On the other hand, women now have a completely different consciousness of themselves than the women that you were talking about a few minutes ago. So, assume that they are interested in getting into politics and they feel that it's important, that they want to go beyond this first stage, they would see that the women who generally went beyond the first stage did it either because they were lucky--they backed the right candidate--
- Shirpser: Timing is very important. It has been in my own political life.
- Chall: --or they had given a great deal of money. That alone may have enabled them to stay on until they were in their eighties, whereas you went out after one term. These are two things. What is the difference between those women who could hang on forever and those women who didn't? Is there a difference between men and women in hanging on?
- Shirpser: Money is probably the most decisive factor of all, because if you're drawing a profile of national committeewoman, the majority of them were wealthy. This was true in 1952 to 1956 when I served. I'm not sure that it's that decisive today, because different candidates have been on the scene who were able to appoint different kinds of people. You know, in California we elect national committee members through the winning delegation.
- Chall: That's different.
- Shirpser: Yes, several other states follow California's plans. Other states elect in a primary, and some committeemen and women are selected by the governor, or by the state party committee.



Shirpser: Some of the biggest fights we had on the Credentials Committee of the Democratic National Committee were from the southern states, where they would sometimes oppose the person who was elected. "The word" would come: "The governor wants this other person." I almost lost some of my best friends in the southern states because I didn't care who the governor wanted. If the person were legally elected and our National Committee legal counsel said, "That man was elected according to the laws of his state," I wasn't going to vote for someone else. The southern members couldn't understand my attitude, because they believe that the governor is supposed to be able to say whom he wants to work with.

Chall: And there was no legal--

Shirpser: Evidently their legal procedure wasn't that strong. There are many ways you get to be a National Committee member, and one of them is through wealth, as well as long service to your political party.

Chall: That would apply to men and women. So that's not necessarily a difference with women.

Shirpser: I believe it is more so, with women. Because men often work their way up through holding political office, some of them were state legislators or congressmen or governors. We've had so few women who were governors, senators, or congressmen, so they didn't have that route to get them to the National Committee membership.

I think people who had ability were usually recognized in the National Committee. You could tell that when someone spoke, by the attention given to that person, and the favorable seconding of his resolution, and the follow-up in the discussion. Many people who were also influential in the discussion would support the motion. So you knew there were certain cliques within the committee who supported each other. That became very evident as time went on.

Chall: This would be among women?

Shirpser: Or with both, occasionally. But I do think that some men may have stayed in office about the same length of time as women, because some of those women had been in there for many years when I was on the committee. They usually were powerfully connected, politically, and through giving funds, and because they supported the winning candidate, and had served their political party at



Shirpser: other and lower levels before coming to National Committee membership.

Chall: Their husbands' funds?

Shirpser: Or their own. Women have money, but they don't give to politics in adequate contributions. It's a strange thing that they don't realize how important this can be. Former national committee-woman for California, Ellie Heller, was extremely generous to candidates. Then, naturally, when she wanted support for some issue in which she believed, they would be influenced by her. I'm sure she could have stayed on as national committeewoman if her candidate had been elected. (That was when President Truman withdrew in 1952.) At that point, she couldn't possibly have been elected by the opposing Kefauver delegation which won the primary. That's what happened to me in '56; I was on the Kefauver delegation in the primary election, when the Stevenson delegation won.

Chall: Generally speaking, the route by which women get beyond the amateur but important work is usually because they have money, and if they use it in the right way they can be influential and make policy. What's another route? Did you see any other women candidates trying for public office besides yourself and Helen Gahagan Douglas during the fifties and early sixties?

Shirpser: There was Dorothy Donahoe, in Bakersfield.

Chall: Was she new to politics when you first met her?

Shirpser: Yes, she was a Kefauver delegate in 1956. She ran for the assembly in California. She had a background in the Business and Professional Womens Club. I think she had been their president in Bakersfield and this was a big help in her victorious campaign for the assembly.

So many of the women that I've known who have been effective in politics, were active in the League of Women Voters and other civic and professional and business organizations. This can well be a training school for politics. In the League of Women Voters, you learn responsibility, and not to talk unless you know what you're talking about. Then, if you run for office, the people you've worked with in these various organizations are loyal to you, much more than the average voter would be. I would say that almost any woman wanting to have a political career should make herself as active as she possibly can in different fields of endeavors in her community and statewide, too. For example, Mrs. Majorie Hirschler who became president of the Board of





Shirpser: Education in Alameda County, had been on the national board of Girl Scouts. She had been a trustee at Mills College. This background is a wonderful asset when you want to go into a specific field in politics.

Again, as I was thinking of women holding political office, I realized how often they had been the wives of legislators who had died; like U.S. Senators Margaret Chase Smith and Maurine Neuberger; Pauline Davis, assemblywoman from Northern California. Many women got into high political offices through the connection that their husbands held the office before them.

If you are active and you make a place for yourself through ability, hard work, willingness to cooperate--and you can often be successful in fund raising, too, without contributing large sums yourself. I think that I contributed up to the limit we could afford. I paid my own expenses to Washington, D.C. But I had enough friends that I could go to, when there was going to be a National Committee dinner here, where we shared the proceeds between the national and state levels. I could always fill one or two tables at \$100 each. I remember speaking of the "Seven Fifty Club" which was the Kennedy-Johnson club in 1960. I contributed \$100 and sold other tickets for a total of more than \$750. This automatically made me a member of the group, a national group at a high level.

Chall: There are many women who just simply can't afford that.

Shirpser: That's right. But they can sell tickets. Sometimes, at my suggestion, five women would put up \$20 each to buy a ticket, and then draw to see who won the \$100 dinner ticket; or ten women might give \$10 each. They can go to friends who can afford it and raise funds that way. Of course, they can also run for the County Central Committees. That's another good way to enter politics. In the past, it was not considered "cricket" to send out mailing pieces or to put an ad in the papers seeking votes for the County Central Committee. You simply had to rely on the fact that your name was well enough known to get sufficient votes to be elected.

. After I was national committeewoman, I was persuaded that I ought to be on the Alameda County Central Committee. I was afraid that I might be defeated at the county level, though I held a national position.

Chall: You could have lost.



Shirpser: And Rex Nicholson ran for it, too. He had been Adlai's state chairman. He said, "Let's get out a common mailing piece." I said, "We're not supposed to." He said, "What do you mean we're not supposed to?" I said, "I was told by the county committee chairman that no one else will send out a mailing piece. So they'll think we're overplaying it, or we're over-zealous if we send out a joint mailing piece, which I would like to do, of course! We've just got to run." He said, "Suppose we get beaten. What will it look like? You're national committee-woman. Suppose you lost the county election?" I said, "It will look terrible, but that's the risk I'm taking."

We both won fortunately. We both found the membership of the county committee very difficult to work with. Some people drank too much, and became abusive. Some others were too aggressive and hostile. I heartily disliked the central committee meetings in those days.

#### Some Pitfalls

Chall: Do you think there's a double standard in terms of how men can behave and get onto national and state committees, even into local politics? Are men permitted certain kinds of behavior different from what women are permitted?

Shirpser: In politics, I think men start with a much bigger base of support. I think there was a double standard in terms of what men's behavior could be, and still be considered acceptable--where standards were far more rigid concerning women. Men can usually raise funds more easily, too.

A woman has got to be a lot "better" than a man to win in a given race. India Edwards told me many years ago, and I found it to be true through my political experience, that most of the places where women are candidates, are in races that cannot possibly be won. Just as an example, when I ran for the assembly in the eighteenth district, there were four of us women candidates for assembly in various parts of California. Really, I think we were all qualified women. Two of us won the primary and two lost. Both of us who won the primary election, lost the general election. Not one out of four women candidates won their assembly races. Obviously, we were in areas where Democrats were



Shirpser: not being elected. The Eighteenth Assembly District in which I ran had never elected a Democrat, in history. People were glad to have me as a candidate and really did "draft" me. Democrat Ken Meade won almost twenty years later. This is where women are often pioneering, losing their own race, but making it easier for the next candidates.

You gave me that article about Pat Nesbit whom I know very well. She is a very attractive and capable woman. She wanted to run for state chairman of the Democratic party in California. She didn't have a chance against Assemblyman John Burton and John Merlo, her opponents. She withdrew when she saw she wasn't getting the support she needed in order to win.

Chall: That would be true of any of the other candidates for that post, male or female, because that's always a tough one.

Shirpser: It's one I wouldn't want.

Chall: There have been women who somehow became state committee chairman.

Shirpser: The only California woman I know is Elizabeth Snyder.

Chall: That's because she had been elected Southern California chairman.

Shirpser: Liz is an extremely capable woman. Also, she had remarkable labor support. She always worked well with labor unions, and they really "went to bat" for her. Her close friend was Congressman Chet Holifield who nominated her at the state convention. He had a lot of support, and was very popular in Southern California, and he enlisted many of his friends to support Liz.

And then I think, too, of the nasty tactics used against her, which boomeranged. For once, women got together who weren't going to stand for that kind of thing and strongly supported Liz. She made a good, fighting speech which was enthusiastically applauded. I worked hard for her election.

Chall: I think that Mary Ellen Leary in the article she wrote about you said, "Politics knows no rules, keeps no conscience." If this is so, and you'll have to tell me, from your point of view, whether it's so, do women want this? For a long time it was supposed that women didn't want this kind of milieu?

Shirpser: I think that's a generalization that goes too far. Mary Ellen was not referring to me. You make your own rules, really. You



Shirpser: do what you think you should. The people who believe in you and think you have sincerity and some ability will support that independence. Others who don't, and who want to control you, will oppose you.

Except in the case of a few people, there was frustration rather than harm done to me. You've gone through the records. You've seen the people I had to struggle with. In all these cases they have been men who were overbearing and egotistical, and who were sure that they knew best. They knew that I was an amateur and thought that I was too idealistic, too impractical.

But as we go back and summarize, many of the things that I struggled for, twenty years ago, have come to fruition since then. So, in a way, I was being pragmatic, too. I saw the need for working in those fields, and while I couldn't accomplish it during my own term of office, I'm proud, and it gives me great satisfaction, that in looking back I see that I "started the ball rolling" in many cases. I think that if you do what you believe to be right and you're not self-seeking, then you don't have to compromise your principles. I was free to do what I thought I should, and that was a big help.

### Characteristics of an Effective Politician

Chall: Are there certain characteristics which make people politically effective? Of course you've seen many politically effective people and they have been effective in different ways for different reasons. The Mitchells and the Butlers, they had effectiveness at their posts even though they were, for you, very hard to get along with.

Shirpser: I don't think either one of them was a very good national chairman. Many other National Committee members had problems with both of them. It wasn't a clash of personalities between them and myself. In many areas where we differed, it was on issues. Neither one of them knew how to delegate responsibility, and they were both cold and reserved men. Matt McCloskey, who was national treasurer, wherever he went people welcomed him with open arms. He was warm, genial, and friendly. He praised your efforts. Wilson Wyatt was like that, too. Estes, and Adlai, and Senator Stu Symington, Senator Frank Church, and Governor Leader of Pennsylvania--you knew that they thought you were contributing





Shirpser: something worthwhile. With Paul Butler and Steve Mitchell you rarely were given a feeling of accomplishment. And so I don't think those two men made good national chairmen. The need is for someone who can meet people and establish a certain amount of camaraderie and rapport. You just don't do your best with people who are antagonistic and overbearing.

From some of the articles I have here, you can see that the press was criticizing them for the same reasons that I did: that they were "so cold and unresponsive and overbearing." Fortunately, I had a large majority of friends and colleagues who believed in me and supported my efforts in contrast with those who put obstacles in my way when I was trying to benefit the Democratic party. I recognize criticism as being valid and even helpful when you are doing things that shouldn't be done, or if you try to grasp more than you can handle. There are many things that I probably would do differently and better today.

Chall: What kind of characteristics make people politically effective? When you think of the people you consider to be politically effective do they have common characteristics?

Shirpser: It's hard to generalize. I would say one important thing is to be able to speak effectively, to be articulate. If you can't think on your feet, when you have to speak extemporaneously, as so often you do, it's very difficult. You learn, of course, as you go along, to be better poised and to be able to think more quickly and to react effectively to a given situation. In fact I have a card here from Bobbie. Daughters always are very frank! But this time she sent me a card saying that I had "improved so much on television, that I looked pretty, that I had spoken well, that I was beautifully poised and that she had been proud of me." That was probably the greatest compliment I ever received. She was comparing me to a couple of years before when I was insecure and nervous, and it undoubtedly showed.

On television, I think that if you can forget how you look, and whether your lipstick is on straight, and whether your hair needs combing, and concentrate on what you are talking about, you will, of course, be more effective. This is what I used to try to do, to remember that I was representing the Democratic party and that I had to do a good job. Then you forget the extraneous things. It certainly becomes a lot easier as you go along, and you become more experienced. I think that's one of the important attributes. I never had public speaking training, but I had to speak quite often in the League of Women Voters



Shirpser: offices which I had held. So it was much easier for me than it would be for someone who didn't have that previous background. I was always nervous, though, before TV programs and when making a speech that was for an important occasion.

I think you have to like people. If you haven't the patience to listen to people (even if they are boring) and who are repeating something you've heard many times before, and if you can't give them the idea that you care about them, and you want to hear what they're saying, and be friendly--you should not hold political office. Those are important qualities. I think that somebody who doesn't like people and the give-and-take of campaigns shouldn't go into politics, because otherwise you could be miserable. I think you have to have a friendly personality. You've got to be willing to listen. You've got to be able to stay awake during long, and sometimes dull speeches.

Nancy Kefauver told me that she would unobtrusively (we used to get creamed chicken and peas on the political circuit) push her peas from one side of her plate to the other, counting them, having previously guessed how many there were.

Chall: She could always look alert.

Shirpser: You have all these little devices that you develop as time goes on. You learn to cope.

Chall: You also need a considerable amount of stamina. That's a physical quality that you have to have.

Shirpser: Nothing can be as exhausting as a political campaign. I think that there is nothing in the world that has as much pressure, tension, and long hours as well as excitement, stimulation, and gratification. Look at the men who have died in office! Senator Blair Moody of Michigan was so young, about fifty years old. Estes was sixty-one, I think. Adlai was in his early sixties. As I look at my wall in my study, with all these pictures, there are so many fine, qualified men who have died too young, because of their commitment to public service.



## Can Women be Effective?

Chall: Of course you went along with them often so you know what kind of stamina was required of them. Generally speaking, are there enough women who would be good office holders who have that stamina? Can you be in an office, beyond the school board, let's say, unless you have that stamina? Is there a way to get around it?

Shirpser: I think campaigning is much easier than it used to be. We don't have whistle-stop trains any more, and that, while it was really exciting and enjoyable, too, was a form of real exhaustion. There are ten or twelve meetings in one day on the platform at the end of the train; and you're talking to the new people as they come on at every station. You have to get their names; you have to get to know their interests; you have to introduce them to the candidate. And by the time he speaks to them for a few minutes, then he has to get out to the end of the platform and speak to the crowds assembled there. And you keep getting these new people on and off the train. The day may start at seven in the morning and end at midnight. You almost crawl off the train. You can hardly stand up, and yet the people who meet you are all fresh and raring to go.

Chall: What about airplane travel? Do you think that has made it simpler?

Shirpser: Of course airplane travel is exhausting, too, if you do as much as we did on the Kefauver campaign. I was only on the plane campaign for a week at a time, and then I would come home and go to bed, and turn off the phone, and pull the door closed. I couldn't function well for days. And Estes went on week after week.

Many of the reporters said that they wouldn't have missed the Kefauver campaign by plane because it was so much more fun than the others. We all liked each other. We got along just fine. Estes was so friendly, and he was available all the time. But they said that a week of the Kefauver campaign was all one human being could take, because of the strenuous scheduling.

But Estes went on week after week, month after month. How he found the strength, I'll never know. I think that it finally killed him.



Shirpser: It would be hard to start a political career when you're an older woman. I began when I was almost fifty years old. I was in good health and had enough stamina so I could "take it." I certainly couldn't have started at sixty-five or seventy and survived it, because I'm sure that my health and strength wouldn't have been sufficient. Men die so much earlier than women do. I must know thirty or thirty-five widows in my age group. So, maybe women have more physical stamina than men.

Chall: Maybe they pace it differently.

Shirpser: Of course many of them have never been in such strenuous activities before. If you look at the average man or woman, certainly women outlive men. Naturally, there should not be "blanket coverage," because individuals vary so much. I have friends who do not work, or do much organizational effort, whom I don't dare call in the morning because they sleep late, and others who like to take a nap before dinner. I don't think you can generalize much.

Chall: So you don't think that being feminine and political are mutually exclusive?

Shirpser: Oh no. I used to have an image of a political woman with a briefcase. Ad gave me a briefcase for Mother's Day, and I had a good laugh. Of course I needed it, but I didn't think of myself as a woman with a briefcase. I mean, I think I am a rather feminine person. You get along much better with the men in the party if you're not hardboiled, and tough, and masculine in your appearance and your way of speaking.

Chall: The new movement would deny that being feminine necessarily means that you have to be frilly--that it isn't a question of being a straight-laced woman with a briefcase, or one in frills. You can be just what you are as a woman and still be tough and aggressive when necessary.

Shirpser: But still maintain femininity. You can be well groomed and wear attractive clothes. You can be friendly, and have some charm in your own approach to things.

Chall: Does that mean you have to play the role of the woman who is sweet and passive?

Shirpser: No, I think you should just be yourself, and not put on an "act." It becomes obvious, if you're pretending to be what you aren't;





Shirpser: I don't think you do well. It's much better to be what you are, whatever that means in the way of strengths or weaknesses. If it's natural to be "sweet and passive" as you asked, then one should be that. But it isn't desirable to go the other extreme and be tough and aggressive. There must be a "happy medium!" At least I tried to remain feminine, and yet still strive for the issues and procedures in which I believed.

Chall: Is it expected that women will behave differently from men in the political realm? You said that they preferred the women to be quiet and not to take part...

Shirpser: One of the reasons I said that is that certain women on the National Committee were often handed resolutions to read. These would often be something of little importance, even though they were giving these resolutions to capable women. It might have to do with memorializing someone who had died recently, or congratulating someone on their fiftieth wedding anniversary who had been on the committee in the past. At the head table they usually gave women secondary introductions. The men always introduced the main speakers.

I told you how Steve Mitchell reacted at the luncheon in his honor in San Francisco, where I was chairman, and where I had done all the work, and State Chairman George Miller wouldn't touch it when I asked him to be co-chairman. Yet when I was chairman, Steve Mitchell registered such surprise that it was almost insulting. He said: "You get much more consideration than most national committeewomen, to be chairman of this meeting!" I really was furious. I had worked so hard. And to have that reaction instead of: "How nice that you have done this so well!"

So the rewards are not always commensurate with the work you do as a woman. I tried not to be aggressive, but to demonstrate that I could accomplish positive results. I see among my speeches of introduction here that I introduced Senator Mike Monroney at a dinner in my area. I was the one who introduced Mayor Dilworth of Philadelphia. I introduced Governor Leader of Pennsylvania. I was often given the role of introducing the main speaker at the dinner committee's request. I thought it was good for the Democratic party that a woman did this, because there were many women in the audience, and this meant recognition for them, too.

I fought to have women at the head table. I can't tell you how difficult that was. When you see a head table and there are twenty men and two women (which seemed to be par in the 1950s), you



Shirpser: know that it shouldn't be that way. Sometimes even the wives of the visitors weren't at the head table. I insisted that they had to be there, or I wouldn't sit at the head table.

Chall: Why was it?

Shirpser: They wanted to honor the men in the party as the important leaders. That's the way it had been, and that's the way they would like it to continue. You've got to battle for innovations and change. Now you will see a great many more women at head tables than you ever did in the 1950s, and that's fine.

Chall: Women are just not going to take a back seat any more.

Shirpser: No, they shouldn't. I think you have to do battle, when necessary. When you have capable women in the leadership positions, you make progress for women's rights. But some women just want to relax and enjoy themselves.

Chall: So women have had to, and probably will have to continue to work very hard if they want to gain a place in the party structure.

Shirpser: But it's so much better than it used to be. Really, we have made great progress. I can see this at all levels. I think that's good, and that we ought to continue to pursue those goals.

Chall: Is that due to the women's movement?

Shirpser: I think it helps a great deal, of course.

Chall: Would it have happened otherwise?

Shirpser: It might have taken more time. But I think the women's movement has to be equated with equal rights for women. If that hadn't been given tremendous prominence, and if women hadn't advanced in every business field, in every professional field, in every educational field, then I think it would have been harder to get more equality for women in politics.

It has been a well-rounded progress, I think.

I keep looking over the summary I made, called "Women in Politics." I probably have covered most of that through your questions. But I started out, "The men met in their smoke-filled rooms to make important political decisions," and I think they still do, when they can. It's hard not to become defensive



Shirpsen: or to develop a martyr complex under those conditions when you are a woman in politics. I also said, "It's a difficult role. You have to fight for your prerogatives and privileges. The duties are piled on. If you can develop a tough skin it's wise." I never could. But I did fight unfair tactics and injustice. You have to believe in what you're doing. (We haven't spoken of that enough, I think.) You have to know the joy of accomplishment, which must be your most important motivation.

"The political campaigns are exciting, exhausting, frustrating, but sometimes they are productive, and enjoyable, and occasionally, victorious. The close contact with your candidate, the bond of deep friendship which is developed with men like Adlai Stevenson and Estes Kefauver, where you share so many experiences and ideas and ideals, this is especially rewarding. If you are a 'do-er' and you take stands on issues you make wonderful friends and formidable enemies.

"It's advisable to have a background of as much civic activities and experience in organizational work as possible." Then I spoke of the League of Women Voters and what I learned there, and that "You have to like people." I mentioned Estes, who after a fourteen-hour day of campaigning, when I was afraid that I'd have to get a doctor for him, looked strong and fresh. I said to him, "How can this be?" He said, "Because something comes to me from the people, something strengthens me." And this, of course, is a wonderful attribute for a candidate.

"You have to be patient enough to go to meeting after meeting, day after day. You hope you can contribute positive ideas and encourage participation.

"Fund raising is one of the greatest problems for Democratic women. It is expected of you and your success or failure in your office often depends on the amount you can raise, regardless of whatever other political successes you have achieved.

"You are often by-passed and overlooked by 'the boys.'" I think I've told you about my seat being taken by a man official of a much lower level of state politics, in the car with Adlai on the way to the Cow Palace, when I was longing to get to know Adlai and I hadn't yet had the chance to talk to him alone. I told you about the men at the head table at a San Francisco regional meeting, who didn't even keep a place for India Edwards and me. This sort of thing kept happening.



Shirpsr: Then I spoke of Mrs. Mitchell saying that she was sorry for Ad. Now there's a women who was married to the chairman of the Democratic party telling my husband she is sorry for him because I was an active member of the Democratic National Committee.

Chall: She was probably sorry for herself.

Shirpsr: Maybe that, too.

"Indifference and apathy among women is saddening and frustrating. Often women are unreasonably jealous of their own women candidates and leaders."

Then I spoke of the value of "frankness, loyalty and sincerity," so that even when the things I said were perhaps amateurish and perhaps not pragmatic enough, still, many of my colleagues and candidates, because they knew I was sincere and they could trust me, felt I was of value to them.

I related some of the things you do, depending on who is the candidate. You might carry a package of your candidate's favorite cigarettes in your purse, carry a highball glass filled with his favorite brand of liquor through the lobby hidden under your fur stole so he can drink it in the car on the way to the next meeting, and so get a little relaxation; be ready to brief him as to where he is so he won't say, "I'm happy to be here in San Francisco" when he is in Oakland, as one of my candidates did! (It was disastrous!) Have the list ready of Democratic congressmen and legislators and county officials at a given location you are visiting, so when they are introduced to him he will know who they are; tell him who is going to meet him at the plane and what their offices are. It's absolutely basic, if you are married, to have a cooperative husband who shares your beliefs, encourages you and is willing to have you go to meetings; to drive you there, to have you in the limelight, to have his meals interrupted by phone calls and to enjoy all this sufficiently to say that "this has enriched our lives," as I was fortunate enough to have my husband tell me.

Then, too, I was saying that when we met Adlai or Estes at the airport they'd sit in the front seat alongside Ad, who was driving, and they would chat on a first name basis. I told you when Adlai left the receiving line to cross the room to say "hello" to Ad. So many wonderful things do come from these political associations, for your husband, too.





Shirpser: Then I said, "National committeewomen are usually wealthy women who have contributed generously for many years." This was not so in my case; I wrote this some time ago. "They are supposed to be seated at head tables, get introduced; sometimes they are given the honor of introducing a minor VIP. Occasionally they are given a resolution to introduce. But always, they are expected to remember to leave the important business where it belongs, to 'the boys.'"

I also said this: "Many invitations come from men in your political party. If you are normally attractive, or intelligent or charming, there are many temptations. There are so many more men in politics than women."

I also spoke of national committeewomen who got divorced while they were serving on the National Committee. So, it's very easy to have a good and exciting time, especially when you are away from home!

Chall: Is there a double standard with respect to that sort of thing? The men, of course, were having their good times. They didn't always have to have them with the national committeewomen! But, what if the national committeewoman chose to have a good time. Would this be frowned upon, or gossiped about, or considered highly sinful?

Shirpser: It depends on the individuals and the circumstances. In the first place, there was much camaraderie among the National Committee members. I remember one time when a national committeeman asked me to have dinner with him. I said, "I'm sorry, I'm having dinner with a couple of national committeewomen." He said, "Who are they?" And I told him. When I went to the dining room table we had reserved, there he was sitting there with these two other women. I said, "How did you get here?" He said, "I wanted you to have dinner with me, and I'm happy to have your friends, too." Nice things like that often happened. Often, a national committeeman would call me and say, "Have you got transportation to the dinner meeting?" If I would say, "No," he would answer, "I have a car. Come and drive over with me." I always tried to share this ride or dinner with other National Committee members, rather than going with only one man. We were used to seeing each other together in all sorts of circumstances. I think many women looked forward to those National Committee meetings.



The Success of Clara Shirpser's Issues

Shirpser: I was reviewing some of the things in which I have been interested in and worked for, which came to fruition later. Of course one of them is equal rights for women. I testified before the Platform Committee in 1952 and in 1956 at Emmy Guffey Miller's request and later, at Alice Paul's request. Estes introduced the bill with several other sponsors for equal rights for women, as I requested him to do.

I remembered my resolution against parades in the aisles, which have now been eliminated. I introduced it to the Rules Committee at the 1952, 1956, and 1960 conventions. Now the Platform Committee sends its report to the delegates to the national convention at least twenty-four hours ahead of the vote. I introduced that resolution in 1956.

In 1955 I testified before Senator Tom Hennings' congressional committee on the need for election reforms and to correct abuses in campaign financing. Some of those reforms finally were passed.

I also worked for the implementation and strengthening of civil rights, civil liberties, and education--speaking to congressional committee hearings, and at conferences.

I always encouraged Democrats to actively participate in politics, on the local and state levels. I was the first Democratic official to organize a series of clubs all over California, which developed into the California Democratic Council, which I helped to found and support.\* During my term of office, these clubs grew to about 40,000 members.

It's a great satisfaction to know that I helped to start some of the political activities and reforms which succeeded later.

Regarding lowering the voting age from twenty-one years to eighteen, I spoke for that many years ago. I don't believe that I ever advocated quotas.

The Kefauver delegation of 1956 held the first local and regional district caucuses--which I had recommended--to choose delegates. We specified that there should be a good representation of labor groups, professions, business, legislators, minority groups, women and young people. And we did our utmost to bring about a well-balanced delegation to the national convention. It

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\*See Senator Alan Cranston's introduction. C.S.



Shirpser: was the first time in my experience that this was done at the district level. We tried to follow their recommendations. I don't say we did in every case. Naturally, some people were left out who, we thought, had to be included. With half votes giving us twice as many delegates, we managed fairly well, I think. Some people we made convention consultants, for example, former Congressman George Outland in 1956.

In 1960, the district caucuses were again used, but it was terribly frustrating to find that their nominated and elected delegates were then eliminated by the statewide committee to choose delegates to the national convention. There were many protests from all over the state including mine. As I previously told you, in my Seventh Congressional District caucus, I was chosen as a delegate (among the top three of six voted upon), and I was eliminated, as were all of the six chosen in the Seventh Congressional District, and others were substituted (not one woman was included). This was worse than not calling a caucus to choose delegates.

Now I'm sort of an "elder statesman (or "states-woman"). As I meet some of the younger people in politics and meetings, quite often someone remembers and says that they had known of me, or their parents had known me, and what I had accomplished encouraged them to participate in politics. This is one of the best things I did, in my opinion.

#### President of Herrick Hospital's Arch of Amethysts, 1956-1973

Chall: We do have a little time and I'd like you to put on the tape smething about your work with Herrick Hospital.

Shirpser: Right after the campaign in 1956 I was called by Alfred Maffly who was the administrator of Herrick Hospital. He is married to Frances Herrick Maffly, who was the daughter of the original Doctor Herrick who founded the hopsital. Their daughter, Jean, had the same misfortune as Bobbie (Barbara, my daughter). She contacted polio almost at the same time.

Chall: When was this?

Shirpser: Nineteen fifty, I think; right after I ran for the assembly. Earl Warren's daughter (they called her "loneybear") had polio



Shirpser: then, too. All three of these girls, at about the same time, were seriously ill. Governor Warren wrote me a wonderful letter, so full of understanding and sympathy. I thought "what a wonderful person he is, that in the midst of all their terrible suffering, he would think of me." I didn't know him well, either.

Chall: How did he know?

Shirpser: There were headlines in the Bay area newspapers: "Shirpser daughter stricken with polio." This happened right after the election. I was known by then. Governor Warren evidently read the article and wrote to us almost immediately. I thought that was a wonderfully kind thing to do.

Bobbie and Rob, and Paul, their four year old son, lived in Menlo Park. There was no hospital there that could take her, because of polio being a contagious disease. I managed to get her into Children's Hospital in San Francisco, but only in a ward. All around her were people in iron lungs. Here Bobbie was, young and pregnant, and she was surrounded by all these people who were hopelessly paralyzed, who could probably never walk again. She just about gave up hope. So I kept fighting until finally I got her a private room. She was getting worse every day in that horrible ward atmosphere.

So then she started fighting again to live, and to recover. The expenses were catastrophic, of course. Fortunately I had taken out polio insurance earlier when my insurance broker told me I should have it. So I was able to give them \$10,000 in one lump sum right away.

Finally, after months in the hospital, she was able to go home. And again, it meant nursing and purchasing equipment. A friend had a swimming pool nearby. We put a heater in the pool and our friends made the pool available for two hours every day (from noon to two o'clock) for Bobbie and Rob. We often packed a picnic lunch. I was down there several times a week, of course. Bobbie went in a wheel chair to that pool daily, with a therapist with her in the pool. She came out on crutches several months later. That was the best and most effective therapy. Bobbie made an excellent recovery, which took hard work and courage on her part.

So, having gone through all this, when Al Maffly called me and he said, "My daughter, Jean, had to go to the Alameda County Hospital. Clara, we've got to do something about this."





Shirpser: I said, "I'll do anything I can." Because we both knew well the terrible need to have a rehabilitation center in our area.

### Building the Rehabilitation Center

Shirpser: I did get fifty women to join the group to establish and support a Rehabilitation Center. They have a nice little fantasy in the Herrick Guild that "the patient is king or queen." So we have a large and decorated crown. One of the women made it and it's very attractive. In the crown, each little vertical piece has a jewel on it, as the arches are formed: diamonds, rubies, pearls, sapphires, etc. My group became the Amethysts. That's the only jewel I could think of at that point that wasn't already in the crown. Many good friends joined because I asked them to do so, and they realized the need. I worked hard to get those fifty women together. I was able to do a good deal of public relations work for Herrick Hospital. There were some interviews regarding our new organization and these got good coverage. In the organizations, where I was still active, I would tell them about the rehabilitation center and ask for contributions and new members. My political experience and contacts were of great help in organizing and getting the Arch of Amethysts established.

Then the Hill-Burton congressional grant was available. Nine hospitals in California applied for it. I knew several of the congressmen on the committee and I wrote them telling them of the good standards and capable staff at Herrick Hospital, and the terrible need for an East Bay rehabilitation center. The administrator of the hospital couldn't keep his own daughter in his hospital, and I spoke of what Bobbie had gone through in San Francisco. I wrote: "This is one of the greatest needs I know, and I'm giving almost full time now to help to develop a rehabilitation center at Herrick Hospital." I spoke before the Hill-Burton congressional committee when they were here as did many other supporters. I was happy that Herrick Hospital received the grant, against the other eight competitors.

I don't mean to imply that there was any undue influence. I was no longer national committeewoman. It is just that when you know people through working with them, you can do things for other causes, which can be helpful. Several times, I have been so pleased that I have been able to help worthwhile causes because I did have that political background.



Shirpsen: So then we got very busy. I accepted the post of chairman of the Women's Division to raise matching funds for the Rehabilitation Center at Herrick Hospital. As always, the Men's Committee had the list of large contributors to solicit for funds. The Women's Committee was given the people who might give \$25 a year, for three years. That was the most popular contribution we were able to develop. We raised almost \$50,000 in the Women's Division. That was a great source of satisfaction to me. I contacted and enlisted very effective women from outside the Herrick "family" (of the Guild), women I had known in other fields, from Berkeley, Oakland, Alameda, Richmond, from the whole East Bay. I got a very strong committee together. We had meetings, luncheons, fund-raising affairs. We went out and solicited funds. Each woman would take a certain number of names, and call on potential contributors. We had a file of potential donors and about a hundred women served on the committee.

Chall: That was to build that wing.

Shirpsen: Yes, it cost a lot of money. There were two empty floors in the new wing to be the site of the rehabilitation center. We got the grant and then had to raise matching funds. We built an excellent center. In my group--the Arch of Amethysts--we pledged enough money to purchase a Hubbard Tank. There wasn't another one in the whole Bay Area except at Kaiser Foundation in Vallejo. The Hubbard Tank is shaped like a large cross, and it has enormous currents of water. A paralyzed person can be lowered into the water of the Hubbard Tank from a hydraulic lift, wearing a minimum bathing suit. The therapist gets right in the tank with the patient. When the strong currents are turned on, the live muscles respond under water that could not be found out of water.

We accomplished tremendously good things in this center. That's one of the best memories in my life. I remember a little girl about a year old, who was carried in by a young mother who didn't look more than nineteen years old herself--a beautiful blond baby. Her mother said, "They tell me my baby will never walk. They tell me you are accomplishing something here. Help me." She started to cry, and of course I did, too. So Dr. Hirschberg, director of the Rehabilitation Center, made this child's recovery his great goal, and perhaps a year later that child was running up and down the hospital wearing braces on her legs. I saw her fall. I froze inside, fearing that she had probably broken her leg. Linda picked herself up and ran, laughing,



Shirpser: down the hall. She went home; she "graduated." She wears corrective shoes now, and she is leading a normal life.

Incidents like that are truly wonderful and gratifying.

I'll tell you one more story that appealed to me tremendously, too. This young man was a carpenter, and he fell from some scaffolding, and broke his back. He was twenty or twenty-one years old. There was plenty of money from workman's compensation and insurance, but their doctors could not help him. He was paralyzed from his chin down. Nothing would move. He wanted to die. He could speak; often he would say, "Let me die." They brought him in to Herrick Hospital Rehabilitation Center, and again Dr. Hirschberg worked with him.

Through the Hubbard Tank they found that there were muscles in this young man's arms that could move. So a rubber arm brace was designed, and the therapist used the motion, back and forth, back and forth, a half hour at a time; and then a longer time, day after day and week after week; and then a longer time, day after day and week after week. I dropped in to see him every time I could and on this day he was smiling. I walked in and said, "I'm so glad to see you're happier today." He said, "This is one of the great days of my life. There was a fly on my nose which bothered me, and I raised my arm all by myself, and I swatted that fly and he went away. I did this myself!"

Later, he learned to type, and to do other things for himself, and he was able to sit in a wheel chair, and to go home to his family. That was a happy day for me, too.

I continued to be president of the Arch of Amethysts for seventeen years. This group of fine women contributed funds annually to buy needed equipment and provided a specially equipped bus for patients in wheel chairs. They entered by a ramp fastened to the bus; it seats twelve. We supported a Post-Pay Patients Rehabilitation Fund to supplement what patients could afford to pay.

I finally resigned as president in 1974, but I will continue to help in every way, and I'm still on the advisory committee to the board of trustees of Herrick Hospital. The sense of accomplishment in helping disabled people resume a more normal life, has been a source of deep satisfaction to me.

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